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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



CECIL CLAVERING FELL HEAVILY ON HIS HEAD ON THE HARD, FLINTY ROAD

A MATRIMONIAL CATCH.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"He meets me in the Park, and comes
At five o'clock to tea,
And goes to balls and even drums!
And says it's all for me;
And tells me damsels in their teens
Are roses dipped in dew,
And looks and laughs, but what he means
I wish I knew—I wish I knew!"

sang Popsey Popplechick in a clear, loud, and not altogether unmusical voice, as she dusted the green lusters, pink vases, elaborate prints, and other tawdry ornaments that decorated her father's drawing-room.

"You seem particularly gay and well pleased with yourself this morning," snapped Miss Popplechick, giving her younger sister a look that was not entirely cordial or kind.

"Am I!"

"Yes, you are. Not but that you always are on good terms with yourself, still you're out-Heroding Herod to-day."

"Now, really. Well, I think I have something to be jubilant about."

"Why, what's the news!" and Penelope Popplechick twirled round, and fixed her sharp green eyes on her junior in a piercing manner.

"Very good news, you'll think."

"Perhaps I shall when I know what it is."

"There's no perhaps in the matter. It's what you've been sighing for ever since we came here."

"Well, what is it!" irritably.

"The barracks are finished!"

"At last!"

"Yes, and what is more, that is more to us, the 200th, the Dulborough Dashers, are coming next week to be stationed there."

"You never say so!" ejaculated Miss Pen, in delighted and almost incredulous wonder.

"I do, though," retorted Popsey, with a toss of her pert and pretty head.

"Who told you!" demanded the other quickly, with a second piercing look.

"What's that to you!" with another pert toss of the auburn locks.

"A great deal. I think I can guess."

"Do then, if you are so clever."

"You know father doesn't like your talking and hob-nobbing with a tradesman like——"

"I know nothing of the kind. Jammy Smith is as much a gentleman as I am a lady," declared the young girl, the brilliant colour flushing to her cheek. "And father shouldn't forget that it's not so long since we had to do with trade."

"Hush!" exclaimed Miss Pen, laying her finger on her thin lips, and looking round apprehensively. "Do you want to spoil all, to let our secret out, and make those grand folk whose acquaintance we have made here look down upon us?"

"I don't care what I do," she retorted, with great impetuosity, "and I do wish we could go

tack to the old life before we were left this hateful money. We were happy then. We're nothing but a set of impostors now, crying after the moon, and getting a green cheese."

"Fudge!" returned Pen, contemptuously. "You liked the turned gowns, the faded hats, the patched boots, less than any of us, and as to the smell of Cheddar and double Gloucester, why you always declared it turned you faint, and that you hated the sight of a slice of bacon—"

"So I did, and do."

"While as to our circle of acquaintance at Hillington not one of them was good enough for you. You turned up your nose—that, Heaven knows, does not want any turning up, as it's over short already—at all of them, and thought yourself too good to associate with them—"

"So I was and am," interrupted Popsey again. "A set of 'butchers and bakers, and candlestick-makers.'"

"Well, what in the name of goodness do you want? You don't care for the parson and his wife, nor barrister Clemens, nor post-office clerk Merion, nor well-to-do old maid Scraggins, nor Doctor Benson and bride, nor bank-clerk Benans—nor independent Mr. Smith, nor any of the highly respectable folk whose acquaintance we have managed to make after strenuous efforts here at B idlington-on-Sea."

"They are all so dull and hum-drum."

"Ah, I see. You want the military," with ineffable scorn and contempt.

"And if so, my want will soon be satisfied."

"I hope it may be. The Dashers I have little doubt will be very exclusive, and want the pedigree of any one they favour with their friendship."

"If they want ours we can romance a little, and tell them a flowery story. Besides, you know, there are the four aristocracies; we might lay claim to that of beauty."

"When you say 'we' of course you mean 'I,' you concealed thing," observed Pen, bitterly.

"I may. At any rate, I think I'll pass muster with the Dashers," and leaning her dimpled chin on her pink palms she stared steadily at her reflection in the mirror over the mantel-shelf, and perhaps her conceit was excusable, for a prettier, fresher, more dimpled childlike face it would have been difficult to find.

The casket was fair—outside; within she was but a poor, vain, silly little creature, her head crammed full of nonsense about lovers, and fine clothes, and aristocratic people; and her mother—an injudicious, vulgar woman—had flattered and spoiled her, telling her that her good looks ought to win her a rich husband, and that there was nothing in matrimony to be considered save the length of the purse and the financial prospect of the aspirant to hymeneal honours; and that "love in a cottage" was a trap and a delusion, a thing that might have answered fairly well in the middle ages, when living was cheap, and the population less extensive, but in the present day it was absolute folly—nay, worse than folly—absolute madness, to think of marrying on less than four hundred per annum. And so on, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

The girl, pretty, childlike, innocent as she looked, was an apt pupil, and before long began to adopt her worldly parent's view of a settlement for life. She was naturally indolent, loving ease and plenty, good living and gay gowns; and so, when her father was left a legacy by a distant relative and moved from Hillington, where he was known as a vendor of cheese, butter, pork, sausages, bacon, eggs, and other such unromantic commodities, to Bridlington, where he set up as an independent gentleman, Popsey gave up—not is must be allowed without floods of tears, and tons of sighs—her girlhood's lover, poor Jimmy Smith, because, *forsooth*, he wore a white apron, and measured out ounces of Bohea and Oopack, and quarters and halves of loaf and "raw," to his master's customers, for he was assistant to a flourishing grocer, and therefore after the Popplechicks' windfall was, of course, utterly beneath them, and not fit to be looked on as a friend, much less as a lover and a probable son-in-law.

Jemmy took his dismissal very much to heart, and two months after the departure of the lady

of his love from her native town he departed too, and being smart at figures managed to get a place as cashier to the principal confectioner at Bridlington, which was certainly a step in the right direction, and a higher post than he had before held; and then once more he fastened his eyes on the rosy loveliness that had been his undoing—now, however, at a distance, except once or twice in a way when Popsey being by herself had melted at sight of his miserable visage and let him speak to her.

He was always full of news, could, of course, tell when any ball was coming off, as his employer supplied all the refreshments, suppers, dinners, &c., of any entertainment that took place, and his last piece of information was decidedly valuable; the Dashers were coming, and Dunster was to supply the mess for them.

Mr. Popplechick was full of wrath, brimming over with righteous indignation when he found the unlucky Smith had had the astounding audacity to follow his youngest and prettiest daughter to her new home, and wondered how on earth he had contrived to find out the spot in this wide world where it was situated; for the retired cheesemonger had been very careful not to leave a trail when he said adieu to double Gloucester and prime Wiltshire, and actually stayed a fortnight in London, in order that his old cronies might not know his whereabouts, and therefore be unable to turn up and expose him to new friends.

But love laughs at everything, and Jemmy followed Popsey, and adored her just as much under the guise of a fashionable and high-bred young lady as he had done as a simple tradesman's daughter; only he, poor simpleton, thought the case that held his jewel was magnificent, and walked past it regularly every night, regarding it with awestricken eyes.

As a matter of fact, Sunlight Villa, as the Popplechicks' abode was romantically named, was a very ordinary, third-rate, semi-detached house, glaringly now, abominably badly built, and finished off in the cheapest manner, with cheap wall-papers, American woodwork, and gaudy tilings.

The taste of its occupants was far from faultless, and so its shortcomings were not hidden, only displayed in a horrible manner. Joshua Popplechick had received two hundred pounds in ready money, besides the three-fifty per annum; and the former sum he spent in abominably ugly furniture, cheap prints, flashy curtains and carpets, and a startling array of pink, green, and blue lustres and vases, which gave to the living-room the appearance of quasi-genteel lodgings, an appearance which Penelope heightened by working with her own fair fingers sundry hideous crochet antimacassars, which were liberally applied to chair-backs and sofa-heads, and proved an everlasting annoyance to visitors who sat down neveral, and rose up with a white-yellow cotton tail hanging to them, at sight of which all four Miss P.'s would rush to relieve the guests of the unwelcome addition to their toilet, thereby causing considerable confusion and fuss.

The best part of the place was the long shady garden at the back, with level grass plot, and many old trees and rare shrubs. It didn't look new or brummagem, all else did.

On entering into his brand-new abode, Joshua, urged thereto by his wife and ambitious daughters, set up a mode of living that can only be described by the term "sham magnificent," and certainly his means were wholly inadequate to his pretensions, and the path he meant to tread led to ruin. But he was fat, good-natured, easy-going, and against his better judgment let his worse-half rule him.

A cook was hired, capable of sending up a dainty dinner; a smart parlour and lady's-maid combined, a miniature boy, whose meagre body was arrayed in shining buttons, and seemingly nothing else, for he was buttons here, and buttons there, and buttons everywhere; and as a finish to this fashionable establishment, an elderly man, who at some remote period had been butler to Lord somebody or other, but who, now in his declining days, was ready and willing to be termed "gardener," and under that title do no

end of odd jobs, besides pottering about the shady garden, weeding the paths and pruning the trees.

The girls wore smart gowns, and the mother smart bonnets; they took tickets for every entertainment that was going on in the town to which they could get without vouchers; smiled at everyone, received the few visits paid them with becoming cheerfulness, and allied themselves closely to the clergyman and his wife.

Penelope working at the mothers' meetings, Susan interesting herself in the Vicar's soup-kitchens, Mary Anne joining the club of ladies who went out ministering to the sick poor, and Popsey teaching in the Sunday-school, where her pretty face and winsome ways turned the heads of half the male teachers, and caused them to feel a most unholly and entirely secular hatred of each other.

Joshua and Sarah, the wife of his bosom, contented themselves with sending guinea subscriptions whenever they could possibly afford it, and very often when they couldn't, and wisely kept aloof, thinking it better that their daughters, who were all more or less good-looking and fairly well educated, should get secure footing in Bridlington society before they appeared, as both of them were shaky as to "h's," and experienced a considerable difficulty in deciding when "were" and when "was" would be correct; in addition to which both, when a trifle excited, would say "hegs," "horange," "hotten," "horder," etc., all of which wise Miss Pen, who was rapidly nearing thirty, and terribly anxious to be settled, argued would let the cat out of the bag, and close the doors of the shabby-genteels, who formed the chief part of the population at this charming seaside town, against them.

And so the four sisters fought their way slowly but surely into such society as there was to be had, and after a year knew nearly everyone there was to know, and went to most of the entertainments given.

Papa and Mamma Popplechick appeared by degrees, and the latter gave some dinners that went off well, and all was *couleur de rose*, with the one exception of Jemmy Smith, and he was the black cloud, for they all suspected that Popsey—Popsey! the flower of the flock, the beauty of the family, the youngest, cleverest, best-mannered—still harboured a smacking liking for her old lover, this measurer of ounces of tea and quarters of sugar.

They had their suspicions of this bright creature, mother, father, sisters, and perhaps their fears were not entirely without foundation.

In the midst of all the gaiety and change of her present life Popsey would sometimes look back with wistful eyes to those old, happy, honest days, when she was what she appeared to be, and wore her sisters' discarded boots, with the toes well stuffed with wool, to prevent their turning up after the fashion of a heathen Chinese's, as they were much too long for her fairy feet, and thought herself smart in their old dresses and furbled-up hats, and came back from church through the corn-fields every Sunday, arm-in-arm with her devoted admirer, plain Jemmy Smith.

Those days were all over, though, and gone with them the dream of a tiny cottage and rose-filled garden, a rustic paradise shared with her unpretending lover, when his circumstances improved, and he struck out a new line, different from that of grocery; and as the girl stared at her own fair face she was wondering whether she was good-looking enough to fascinate one of these gay red-jackets who were coming to take up their quarters in the new barracks, and how she could improve her appearance, and her chance of winning a catch.

"Yes, I think I'll do for the Dashers," she reiterated, with a last long stare at the big blue eyes, pink and white skin, and Auburn *chevelure*, as she took her elbows off the mantelshelf and faced round.

"You're quite concealed enough to think anything," snapped Penelope, crossly.

"Am I?"

"Yes. You're a heap of affectation."

"Now, Pen, you're jealous, I'm sure, and

you're showing it in an absolutely ridiculous fashion!"

"Jealous! Of you!" exclaimed Miss Popplechick, snorting with rage, for she was twenty-nine, and Popsey eighteen, and the bloom was beginning to fade from her cheek, and the light of early youth from her eyes, and she knew it was so, though she would not own it, even to herself, and was proportionately angry at any hint of jealousy from a younger woman.

"Of you! Preposterous!"

"What is there preposterous about it?" demanded the other, coolly, as she dusted a bright pea-green vase. "You're over so much older than I."

"Ten years," interrupted the mature spinster, eagerly.

"Eleven," retorted Popsey, stolidly. "Every bit of eleven. My birthday is in April, yours in March; and you are exactly eleven years, three weeks, and two days older than myself."

"Well, and if I am!" with a glare of rage.

"Well, if you are, it is quite enough to make you jealous of me."

"Saucy mfx!" growled Pen.

"Pooh!"

Two of the reddest, prettiest lips in the world were pouted at her.

"You want to be taken down a peg," went on Popplechick Major, "to have the pride knocked out of you. You ought to be locked up and fed on bread and water. That's the diet that would suit your complaint!"

"I beg to differ with you. I think it would agree with you far better than with me; for my skin is clear, while yours is sallow. You look bilious, my dear; I fear cook's made dishes disagree with your digestion. Try the bread and water."

"You forget yourself, you rude, underbred child!" and, collecting her ribbons, Pen flounced towards the door, meaning to leave the field clear for her enemy, only at that minute it opened, and she came into violent collision with her portly mother.

"What's the matter! What's up?" inquired that lady, seeing in an instant something was wrong.

"That child has been insulting me," pointing at the smiling culprit with accusing finger.

"Not at all," declared the latter, urbanely.

"I only said that I thought she was jealous of me, because I am younger and prettier, which is the truth. Now is there anything insulting in that, mother?"

"Well, no, my dear," returned the partial parent with some slight hesitation; "but hit is better not to say them kind of things, they 'art folk."

"There," said Popsey, with a toss of her head in Pen's direction.

"You wouldn't side with her if you knew what she's been doing, mamma," put in the aggrieved one, who always spoke of Mrs. Popplechick as "my mamma."

"Why, what has she been doing?"

"Disobeying yours and papa's commands."

"Indeed! In what way?"

"Philandering about with Jemmy Smith, and—"

"What a story!" broke in the girl. "I didn't say half-a-dozen words to him."

"Then you hown to 'aving spoken to him!" said Mrs. Popplechick, with a sternly impressive demeanour, the effect of which was rather spoiled by her misplacement of the aspirates.

"I said 'good-morning,' and listened when he told me that the barracks were finished, that the Dulborough Dashes were coming next week to be quartered there, and that his people were going to supply the mess and carry out contracts for ball suppers and anything of that sort that they may require."

"Ah! did he tell you that?"

"Yes."

And in a moment the matron forgot her anger, and began an animated discussion with her four daughters, for Susan and Mary Anne came in and strengthened the council as to ways and means, and how they could wring money out of the long-suffering Joshua for new dresses, fashionable hats, and general smart trapping!

and went deep into calculations as to what dinners and entertainments she would be able to give to these gallant sons of Mars, who might turn into possible sons-in-law.

CHAPTER II.

BRIDLINGTON ON SEA was in a state of fever. Excitement was at its height, for the day when the Dashers were expected had arrived. All the tradesmen polished up their plate-glass windows and rearranged their goods to the best advantage.

The flower-girls filled their baskets to overflowing with early spring blooms. The servant-girls donned their whitest aprons and prettiest caps; the boatmen on the beach brightened up the fittings of their craft and hung flags on them; the cafés on the promenade laid in a large stock of toothsome dainties in anticipation of the hungry troopers who might visit them in the course of that evening; while the public outdid themselves in their endeavours to show an attractive front to the new-comers, who would probably be their best customers; while it must honestly be allowed that young maids and old ones, matrons and misses, all donned their best bibs and tuckers, sought for their most becoming head-gear, and sallied out, only to shop, or do the necessary housekeeping. That was all, of course. They had no wish to take even a side glance at the red-coated gentry! No! Not they, indeed! as Miss Pen declared, putting on her Sunday best and marching out into the long, narrow high street, where the old-fashioned houses bulged out overhead story above story, until the top windows nearly touched each other, and where the spring sunshine fell here and there through an opening, lightening the gloom of the old-world buildings. The country round about looked bright and fair enough as the Dashers trotted through it.

Many a well-known tree was beginning to bud. The soft wind was waking up the golden celandine from its bed of dead leaves under the hedges, where it lay sleeping, and bidding the starry primrose look up, and show its pale petals. The ground ivy was bright blue, and vied with the periwinkle; contrasting with the red flowers of the dead nettle and yellow coltsfoot.

The sunrays were luring the bees from their hiding places, to dally with the dazzling gorse flowers and tiny clusters of fragrant violets. Larks were singing and soaring up among the silver-fringed clouds of Heaven, among its star-spangled plains; while the modest thrush and lute-voiced blackbird answered each other with sweet calls and trills of music.

It was all charming, enlivening, after the dull grey skies of winter, and dearth of herbage and greenery, and the Dashers seemed to find it so, for they looked about with evident interest, as they clattered along with no end of a noise, and jingle of curb-chain, sabre and spur, a gay and gallant throng, well horsed, well set up, the flower of England's chivalry. They slackened speed as they entered the town, and gave the gaping town-folk a better opportunity of admiring the gorgeous trappings and nodding plumes; and the good people made the most of the opportunity, and watched them with intense interest all the way along, from one end to the other of the long, queer street, for the Belfast Barracks were right the other end of the town, lying a little way back from the new esplanade—a fine pile of buildings with all modern improvements, a splendid ball-room, a large riding school, good quarters for the men, and simply perfect ones for the officers, with a lovely garden in front laid out with great taste.

"Not bad, eh!" said Captain Claverling, the "beauty" of the regiment, to his sworn friend and chum, Major Harvey, looking round the spacious mess-room with approving eyes.

"Very good, I think," returned the Major, looking at the regimental plate, set out to great advantage, on the sideboard, on the glittering glass and snowy napery, and general air of comfort, combined with excellent taste.

"Perhaps we shan't have so much to grumble

at after all," taking note of the view of far-stretching, sunlit ocean, dancing and leaping, and gleaming in the light and warmth of the spring day.

"Certainly not, as far as our billet is concerned," laughed Haviland Harvey. "Nothing could be better."

"Agreed, but the town! A hole, Havi, nothing but a hole!"

"Don't pass such a sweeping criticism on the ancient place until you have thoroughly examined it, and are competent to pass an opinion on its merits or demerits, its beauties and ugliness, its comforts, or want of them."

"There isn't much to examine, I take it. It consists of one street."

"That is a long one, you must admit."

"Yes, there is plenty of it. Quantity, not quality."

"Quantity is better than nothing. Remember, you thought the whole place would consist of half-a-dozen shops, a public-house, and a couple of brand-new untenanted villas."

"Acknowledged, I did."

"You were wrong."

"I am glad to find I was, and am."

"There are some rather nice-looking places about."

"Yes. That one on the crest of the hill, just outside the town, was no end of a nice place."

"That it is, and well kept, too."

"I wonder to whom it belongs!" meditated Claverling.

"So do I," laughed Harvey; "and also who the lady with the figure is."

"Yes. Superb, wasn't it?"

"Certainly, though she may be 'angel to follow, a devil to meet.' Many women manage by the help of their corset-makers to preserve a youthful and charming *tournure* long after their faces have gone to rack and ruin and become utterly unsightly."

"That may be, only I'll bet a pony the lady in question has a face that matches her figure."

"Possibly."

"I wish we could find out who owns the place."

"I have no doubt you can easily do that, and without much loss of time—if any."

"What do you mean?" asked the Captain.

"That fellow is evidently a native," nodding at one of Dunster's men, who was helping the mess-waiters to arrange some lovely flowers in the great silver epergne that graced the centre of the table, and in the handsome vases that flanked it, "and could give you all the information you want."

Acting on the hint, Cecil Claverling lounged across the room and engaged the man in conversation. He happened to be less "chuckle-headed" than most of his class, and answered all questions intelligently, and at last Claverling put the question.

"What is that gray-stone house on the top of the hill, half-hidden among trees, called?"

"Heron's Court, sir."

"To whom does it belong?"

"Squire Hartdyke, the best-hearted, most generous gentleman in the country."

"That is great praise. You speak as though you know the family well."

"I ought to, sir, seeing that my mother has been cook there this twenty years and more, and that my sister has been Miss Clara's maid since she left the schoolroom five years ago."

"Ah! then the Squire has a family?"

"Yes, sir. Son and daughter. Master Jack, as we allus call him, thou' he's five-and-twenty next Michaelmas Day, and Miss Clara."

"The daughter is the younger, then?" put in Harvey, with the base design of finding out her age, for he was aware that a woman, like a horse when thoroughbred, finds it extremely difficult to hide the date of her birth, and this girl, county born and bred, would of course be known to all the aborigines.

"Yes, sir. Miss Clara was nineteen last month."

"And Mrs. Hartdyke?"

"Is dead over ten year, and the Squire's half-sister, Miss Maturin, has kept house for him ever since."

"And what does Miss Hartdyke say to that, to her place being taken by another?"

"Way, nothing, sir; she's mortal fond of her aunt, and my sister Jenny tells me is just the sweetest-tempered young lady as ever lived."

"Of course her father is very much attached to her!"

"He just worships the ground she treads on. She's his bit of comfort in the midst of all his trials and troubles."

"Trials and troubles," echoed Clavering; "has the master of Heron's Court troubles?"

"Ay, sir, that he have. I don't know as I ought to tell you," lowering his voice so that the other waiters should not hear his words, "but I suppose you'll get to know soon enough, so here goes. Master Jack he ain't as quiet or steady as he should have been. He's betted and gamed, and got himself deep into debt more than once. The Squire paid everything up for him twice, and has had to retrench all his expenditure in consequence; but they do say, them that knows," still more confidentially, "that he's gone a mucker again, and mortgaged every acre he can."

"What! disposed of his reversion to that charming place! What a crime!"

"No, he ain't done that, sir, for the simple reason that he couldn't. He will only have a life interest in the Court itself, and about six acres of the choice-timbered land that is around; all the rest is mortgaged up to the hilt, as it comes to him absolutely, and nobody can't help his getting it."

"Mr. Jack is wild, then?"

"Wild ain't the word, sir. 'Twixt you and I he's a regular bad 'un, and he drinks—my! I never see anyone go harder at champagne and moselle and brandy-and-soda than he does!"

"Jack seems to be a bit of a dog," remarked Clavering to Harvey after they tipped the waiter, and sent him away very well satisfied.

"A drunken sot not worth talking about. Well, Cecil, after all you haven't found out what you wanted."

"Haven't I?"

"No. You betted a pony the lady's face was as good as her figure, and your friend, the loquacious waiter, never said one word about it!"

"No, but he said she was amiable, and that, with a man, is generally the French for pretty when applied to a woman."

"Perhaps so," laughed the Major. "I won't dispute about it with you, as you are better versed in the ways of women than I am."

"His only books were woman's looks, And folly's all they've taught him."

hummed Harvey, as he sauntered off and left his friend to find his way to his own rooms, which he did shortly, and superintended the arrangement of his goods and chattels in the spacious pair of rooms allotted to him.

Thoroughly comfortable they looked when all was finished, a blazing fire on the hearth that lit up everything, glinting on the silver-topped bottles on the dressing-table, the ivory-backed brushes, the brass writing-set, the neat davenport, the rows of polished boots and shoes of every sort and kind, from regimental jacks to evening pumps, the hunting-crops, swords, whips, pistols, sporting prints, stag-heads, foxes brushes, bear rugs, and the thousand and one things with which men like to decorate their rooms.

With a sigh of pleasure Clavering threw himself into an inviting easy-chair, and took a cup of tea his servant offered him, while Cripple, a particularly ugly fox-terrier, and Lion, an equally handsome colley, fought for possession of the best place on the rug at his feet, a battle which ended in the large dog sitting on his master's feet, and the small dog, not to be outdone, sitting on him.

"Get out, you tykes," he laughed, administering a slight kick, which proved of no use, and did not dislodge the tykes. "Your affection is rather overpowering."

"Shall I turn them out, sir?" asked Dacres, standing stiff as a poker before his superior officer.

"No, let them alone, poor brutes," he answered, indulgently, for which kindness Lion snuggled his head with an ice-cold snout.

"Any letters?" he demanded after awhile, when, having finished his afternoon cup, he proceeded to light a big cigar.

"Five or six, sir," returned the other, presenting a handsome sallow on which lay several letters. Some were pink, delicately scented *billets*, evidently invitations from the feminine portion of the community; others were of a bluish-grey hue, and smacked of touting tradeswomen, eager to increase their circle of customers, and some were a generally masculine air. Slowly and carefully Cecil skimmed them through.

There was an invitation from the Mayor to dinner on the 10th prox., a tailor's circular, an insinuating epistle from a Jew money-lender, who professed himself willing to lend any amount of money at next to nothing per cent, an advertisement from the chief hair-dresser of the town, some of the county folks' cards, indicating on which day of the month they were to be found at home; an intimation from the M.F.H. of the neighbourhood that the last meet of the season would take place at Curragh Castle two days later; and last, but not least, a pale-green envelope, with a mass of gilded leaves and bronze-green dickie-birds about it, which enclosed an equally gorgeous card whereon was announced, in large gold letters, "Mrs. and the Misses Popplechick at home every Friday from three until seven."

"What on earth is that to me?" laughed Clavering. "Popplechick! What a name! A rose by any other name! But no, a Miss Popplechick would always be a chick, and not one to my liking, I take it. Vulgar inside and out. Money, no breeding!" and throwing the card down with a sigh to think there was nothing from Heron's Court—for he felt a strange interest in that place and its inmates—he proceeded with Dacres' help to get out the things he wore, and into his shell jacket, and then, as the bugle sounded, lounged across to the mess-room where the Colonel and most of his brother-officers were assembled, talking and laughing over their different experiences, and all wondering who the chatelaine of Sunlight Villa could be, and how she had found out their titles, names, etcetera, with such accuracy.

"Beware of her, my dear fellow!" said Major Harvey, with mock solemnity, as he raised the first spoonful of soup to his lips; "she means mischief to the Dasher's!"

"Take care yourself, Major," laughed Digby Cheriton, a fair-haired, blue-eyed lieutenant, known to be in the habit of losing his heart to some fair one regularly every month, and finding it again only to bestow it once more. You are a person of importance, one worth being chased in the matrimonial court."

"No, you mistake, *mon ami*. My grey head," touching his dark locks, threaded here and there with silver hairs, "preserves me from the designs of match-making mammae."

"I am not so sure!"

"Nor I," chimed in Clavering. "I am inclined to think nothing will save you from Mrs. Popplechick. She has found, will be in 'full cry' before a month has elapsed, and means to be 'in at the death' of one of us before the year is very old."

"That is exactly what I say, and why I warn you youngsters. She means to be mother-in-law to the regiment."

"Well, if she means that," put in Colonel Turner, who felt himself safe, being a married man, "she must have an extremely large family."

"I have no doubt she has. 'The misses' on the card stands, you may be sure, Colonel, for a formidable array of females, varying probably from sixteen to forty, or thereabouts."

"In that case you fellows will have a variety to choose from, and will be *difficile* indeed if you are not suited and mated."

"The name would be enough for me," groaned Harvey. "It is disenchantment itself."

"The young ladies will remove that objection by being very willing. I have little doubt, to take yours."

"They may be old ladies!" remarked

Cheriton, with a demure twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Or young old women, which are the worst kind of all," returned the Major, who seemed to have taken a great aversion to this unknown lady and her brood.

"Well, we shall see before long what they are like, and the other *demoiselles* of the county," said Cecil, reflectively, still thinking of that graceful figure he had seen amongst the old trees of Heron's Court.

"Not a doubt of it," agreed his friend, cautiously. "Young and old, rich and poor, fair-faced and plain-faced, big and little, high-bred and low-bred, the feminine part of the population will turn out now that we have arrived, and display their charms, or their lack of them, for our edification."

"Harvey, I believe you are actually becoming conceited."

"Do you know I really think I am," agreed the Major, and then the conversation drifted into other channels.

CHAPTER III.

Two days later all was stir and gaiety at Curragh Castle. Long lines of carriages were drawn up along the curb, red coats by the score were seen scampering here, there, and everywhere, and a few sober black ones. Smart fox-hunters were busy chatting to the fair occupants of the carriages; bending over the glossy arched necks of their horses, to breathe soft-nothings, and hear tender replies, while the bright eyes flashed glances and did no end of execution. At the further end stood the huntsman with the hounds, the whipper-in, and the grooms who led extra horses.

There were not many fair equestrians, and the one who attracted most notice and admiration was a woman of quietly figure in a dark-green, tight-fitting habit, that showed off every line and curve of her exquisite figure to perfection. Her get-up was perfect, from the jaunty little hat resting on her dark tresses, to the white gauntlets on her hands, and she sat her horse as though she were part of him, only most people thought she deserved a better mount. He was a great, raw-boned, raking chestnut, with an ugly square head, a nose that can only be described as "Roman," and three white stockings—a sorry hack to look at, though perhaps a good one to go.

Beside her, astride an equally raw-boned, ugly grey, sat an old gentleman, with silvery-white hair, and a remarkably handsome face. They were Squire Hartdyke and his daughter Clara. A circle of admirers surrounded her, and him too, because he sat so near her that no one could rein his horse between them, and were the most remarkable group in the field.

"By Jove, there she is!" said Captain Clavering, as the Dasher's drag drew up near the group, and his quick eye caught sight of the handsome figure.

"Where?" asked Harvey, with unconcealed eagerness, adding, a moment later, with just a shade of embarrassment in his manner, "Of course you mean the figure!"

"Of course. Now for the face," and Cecil sprang off the drag and on to the beautiful bay mare his groom was leading with extreme agility and haste.

"Here, wait a moment," called Harvey, who, less active, was longer in mounting his sorrel gelding. "What a hurry you are in!"

"And how slow you are," retorted the other, as he reined in the mare for a moment.

"What is the use of such haste! How are you going to get introduced?"

"Didn't say I was going to be introduced, did I?"

"Well, no, you didn't. Still I hardly supposed 'Beauty' would be content with looking at a pretty woman."

"We don't know that she is pretty yet," he answered, coolly, riding as near the Heron's Court group as politeness would permit, but soon a half-suppressed exclamation broke from his lips, and his eyes rested full on Clara's face.

It was oval, or rather, would have been a perfect oval save for a hollowness of outline, that was a sure indication of either mental or physical suffering; the skin, a pale pure white, the features of delicate mould, the lips sweet of expression, yet firm, and of a deep red colour; the eyes, large, liquid, and heavily fringed, were of that deep, melting brown, which at times, when under any excitement or emotion, looks black; the hair, too, that framed this beautiful face was of the same hue, while the clearly pencilled brows were black, and were slightly drawn in a habitual tension that seemed the result of much thought, not always of a pleasant character.

"You have won your bet," whispered the Major, "the face matches, if it does not surpass the figure."

"It is beautiful!" said Clavering, reflectively, still gazing at the unconscious object of his admiration.

"Not happy looking."
"That pensive expression is its chief char."
"And owes its origin to Master Jack."
"Yes, confound him."

"A queer mount, that of hers."
"Awful. Any other woman than one so full of grace would look ridiculous on such an ugly brute. I should like to lend her Ajax; she'd look simply magnificent on him."

"Softly, softly, Cecil, my boy," cried the elder man. "You're not introduced yet."

"No, but I shall soon be. There is Cochrane in the group, he shall make me known to the Squire's daughter." And spurring his mare forward, he was soon beside his acquaintance, and after a little desultory talk was introduced to Hartdyke and Clara.

As her large, soft eyes met his he felt a thrill, such as he had never experienced before, run through him from head to foot, and entered into conversation with something less than his usual ease and aplomb.

"You must be my instructor," he said, after a while, "and tell me who all the people are. You know I am a stranger here."

"I will do my best," she answered, with that soft, sad smile he thought so charming. "Whom are you curious to know?"

"Not anyone in particular."
"Everyone in general!"
"Exactly so."

"I will begin with those four ladies in that open barouche. The elderly one is Lady Grace Jarvis, and the three others are her daughters, all considered belles. Of the men talking to them one is Sir Allardice Bendale, the other Marmaduke Marton, and so on went Miss Hartdyke.

"And who is that pretty childish girl in the pony phaeton?" asked Cecil, indicating a smart little carriage in which sat a lady of uncertain age, much haroured and got up, and by her side Popsey Poppelchick, looking the incarnation of health and beauty.

"That is Miss Popsey—"
A clatter of carriages passing drowned the surname, he only heard "Popsey."

"You seem to know everyone," he remarked.
"That is only natural. I have lived here all my life."

"And mean to continue living here?" he asked, thoughtlessly.

"Ah! that I can't say," she returned, with a quick sigh, as her brows became more drawn, and a shadow fell over her face.

"Now do, please, tell me who this grand dame is?" he implored, partly to distract her from the unpleasant train of thoughts that his remark had evidently awakened, and partly because he really wanted to know who this magnificently attired personage was.

"Oh, that is Mrs. Poppelchick."
"Really?"

"Yes, really. Do you know her?"
"I have not that pleasure yet. But I find she knows me, which is a much more serious matter."

"I should imagine so. But—I don't understand."

"Neither do I, Miss Hartdyke, I assure you. Only when we arrived on Tuesday we all found gorgeous cards of invitation from this lady to

attend her Friday "at homes" and were considerably amused at it. Do you visit her?"

"I! Oh dear no!" and then as their eyes travelled back from studying the lady in question they met, and then both laughed. And he thought he had never heard anything sweeter or more musical.

And it was no wonder, for Mrs. Poppelchick and her three eldest daughters presented a curious appearance. They were in a huge, shabby fly, with a starved, broken-kneed horse in its shafts, that seemed hardly able to stagger along, and they were attired in all the colours of the rainbow, especially Mrs. Poppelchick, who wore a green mantle, a pink bonnet with huge nodding feathers, and tan-coloured gloves.

Popsey had shown her sense when she accepted Mrs. Barrister Clemens' invitation to occupy a seat in her pony phaeton.

"Do you mean to attend her Fridays?" inquired the Squire's daughter when their merriment calmed down.

"Not if I can help it," he answered. "It would hardly be to one's advantage to be seen in such a woman's society much."

"No, perhaps not, and—"

But just then the horn sounded, and away went the hounds after Master Reynard, who had burst off in great style, and away went Miss Hartdyke's old hunter, flying close up to the foremost riders. Clavering was surprised at the pluck and pace of the chestnut, and did his best to keep up with him, only the mare had her work to do.

On she went, her dark habit flying out, her lithe figure erect, taking everything that came in her way.

Hedges, ditches, gates, fences, the raking chestnut cleared them as she lifted the reins, and she sat him firmly as if strapped to him. Cecil admired and followed, only when they came to a swift-running brook, wide and deep, he hesitated, thinking she would hardly take it, but she did and cleared it in famous style, using her whip and spur with a will.

By this time the field was considerably thinned, and she was the only lady in the running, so when they ran the red rogue to earth in the underwood, and killed, she received the brush, and the congratulations of the few men that had kept up.

"You must allow me to congratulate you, Miss Hartdyke," said the Captain, as they paced slowly back towards Bridlington through the muddy lanes.

"On what?" she asked, looking up at him dreamily.

"On receiving the brush."
"Oh, that!" she responded, indifferently. "It is not the first by many. I have near a score at the Court."

"I dare say you have. You ride splendidly!" he said, enthusiastically.

"I am used to it. I hunt whenever I can in the season, and have been in the saddle since I was four years old; so small, that I was held on by my purse."

"That is the right thing, to begin young."

"Yes, I suppose it is," with a sigh, and an absent demeanour that nettled the gallant Captain a trifle, for he was used to come, see, and conquer.

"You are sorry, then, the hunting season closes to-day?" he went on.

"Yes and no. Yes, for myself; I so love to follow on the hounds' heels. No, for poor Reynard. I always pity the beast, even as I ride after him, and help to hunt him to death."

"Do you really?"

"Yes. You think it an unsportmanly, or rather, a womanlike feeling, don't you?"

"No, not exactly, only it seems contradictory to hunt what we pity."

"True," she agreed.

"Now, I am unforgotten sorry there will be no more meets this spring."

"Are you? Why?"

"Because they would have given me an opportunity of meeting you," he said, boldly.

"Ah!"
She blushed all over her pale, pure face, brow, cheek, and chin.

"And, too, if you would have permitted it, I

should have liked to offer you a mount on my new hunter, Ajax. He is almost black, sixteen hands high, and a perfect jumper; such a pretty animal. As you are a lover of horses, you would, I think, like him."

"I am sure I should," she agreed, with sparkling eyes, and an air of animation on her features that added to their beauty.

"Therefore my disappointment is great."

"I am sorry," she said, simply, having none of the artificial tact of a more conventional woman to bring to bear on the subject.

"There is my father," she said, a moment later, as they emerged on to the high road, and saw the Squire sitting like a statue on his grey gelding.

"I thought you would come this way, my dear!" was his greeting when they came up.

"Did you, father?"

"A glorious spin, sir, was it not?" said Cecil.

"It seemed so, as far as I went," laughed the old man, "but I confess Clara outrides me."

And then, as the three rode slowly on to Heron's Court, Clavering received the invitation he was longing for, and accepted it eagerly.

That night he went to a carpet-dance at Mrs. Clemens' and met Popsey Poppelchick, and, taken with her pretty face and gay manners, flirted with her just to pass the time; paid her no end of compliments, and promised to patronise the Friday evenings, and so forged the first link of the chain that was to bind him hand and foot.

CHAPTER IV.

ONCE the Dashers began to accept invitations, and go out, everyone vied with each other in entertaining them, and a series of balls, carpet-hops, dinners, luncheons and concerts were the consequence, which were to be succeeded in the warmer weather by picnics, tennis-parties and boating.

At the more exclusive gatherings Clavering always met Clara Hartdyke, and took great pains to improve the friendship commenced at the meet, which he did not find a very difficult matter, as the lady was evidently partial to him. He did not quite know what and he had in view, in thus trying to strike up an extremely warm, and scarcely platonic friendship with a very beautiful young woman, for he was not a marrying man. At any rate, he had never thought of it up to the present time, though there was no reason why he should not contemplate matrimony if he chose.

He was an only son, and his father, Mr. Clavering, had left him several hundreds a-year, while his mother, Lady Anne, had willed all her estates to him.

Though decidedly extravagant he was not in debt, as Lady Anne always paid up everything for him at the end of the year, and that left him his income to spend in trifles as he pleased.

He was decidedly a catch, *un bon parti*, a man to be courted, though the Squire's daughter did not know this, and reciprocated his advances, because she sincerely admired and liked him.

He was well read, had travelled a good deal, and possessed most winning manners; it was therefore no wonder he fascinated, and Clara was not the only one who fancied the dashing cavalry man.

Popsey Poppelchick was dazzled and flattered by the half-jesting attention he paid her, not because he particularly cared about her, or meant any treason towards Clara, but just because she was the prettiest girl in Bridlington, and set her cap at him in the most unmistakable and barefaced manner, and because it is hard for a young man to reject the advances of an extremely good-looking girl, when that girl does not mean to be snubbed or to have her advances rejected.

Without knowing it Clavering was getting himself talked about with Popsey, and more than one of the Bridlington folk thought it a settled affair.

Now Cecil had no thought of this, and meant nothing, only when Miss Poppelchick the fourth pressed him in her pretty way to promise to come in and have a cup of tea with them that

afternoon, and that she would have the nicest buttonhole in the world ready for him, it is hardly to be wondered at that he promised and went.

He could not see Clara every day unless he declared himself and became her betrothed husband. The Squire was stern and old-fashioned in his notions, and would have no men hanging constantly about the house unless they had the right to do so; and this Claverling was hardly prepared to do; in fact, he did not know his own mind, and, hesitating, was lost.

Now into Sunlight Villa he might turn without ceremony at any hour of the day, and almost of the night, for Mrs. Popplechick had tasty suppers, with heaps of oysters, hot lobsters, and other dainties likely to please fastidious palates in the small hours, and the Dashers were frequently to be found there; that is, those of the officers who were young, and well-to-do, and likely to marry.

It became a sort of habit to Cecil to turn in there and get what he wanted. A cup of tea, a glass of cham, a cherry-cobbler, a brandy-and-soda, anything at all that he might be pleased to ask for; and it must be allowed that the wine, and everything provided for those gallant sons of Mars was of the best description, for Mrs. P. was letting the money fly in her endeavours to catch a wealthy son-in-law, and did nothing by halves.

Then Popsey was so pretty, and always nicely and becomingly dressed, and her manner was so cooling and caressing, so flattering, that it soothed Claverling's perturbed spirit, and while really in love with one woman it appeared as though he were *epais* of another. And that was the state of affairs one bright May day, as he lounged in the drawing-room at the villa, drinking tea and exchanging badinage with the Misses Popplechick.

"Is your tea sweet enough?" asked Popsey, seating herself beside him in a carelessly graceful attitude, which displayed her little foot in a coquettish brown slipper, and the lace frills on her skirts.

"Of course it is," he answered, in that half impudent, wholly familiar manner which men adopt towards women for whom they have no very great respect. "Didn't you pour it out, and haven't you looked at it?"

"Certainly I have. Only I didn't think that would be enough honey for you," she retorted.

"You generally don't undervalue your charms, my fair friend," he laughed, satirically.

"Why should I?" she inquired.

"I see no reason why you should."

"How?"

"Your uncommon humility struck me."

"It is not a usual failing of mine."

"True, it is not."

"But remember last Thursday you told me the claret cup was like vinegar."

"So it was."

"Well, I looked at that."

"Nonsense, Miss Popplechick, you could not have done so."

"I did; but don't forget," lowering her voice, "you promised to call me Popsey."

"Did I?" he asked, innocently.

"Yes, and I do hate the name of Popplechick now."

"I hardly wonder at that. It isn't a pretty cognomen."

"It's hateful," she declared, with glowing cheeks.

"There's one thing," he said, cominglingly, "you won't always be called Popplechick."

"Not?"

"You will change your name some day."

"Do you think so?" she murmured, with downcast lids and well-affected embarrassment, wondering if he meant anything, while Susan and Penelope led Cheriton, who was also there, out into the garden, leaving the field clear for Claverling if he wished to propose. Only he didn't take advantage of the chance offered, but flirted, and teased, and laughed with the girl, finally suggesting that they should try the garden too, a suggestion to which she agreed

rather reluctantly, for she liked being alone, jesting and joking with Cecil.

Out in the garden, however, she soon recovered her good humour. It was so pleasant sitting in the swing along between two great oaks, through whose fresh young leafage the sunlight fell in chequered patches, where the warbling of the feathered choristers was heard, and the soft wind blew balmily and gently.

"No dance on for the next fortnight," she said with a discontented pout, as she swung lazily to and fro. "How dull it will be!"

"A little dullness won't hurt you," snapped Pen. "You've had gaily enough and to spare lately."

"Can't have too much of a good thing," she answered, coolly. "What do you think Lieutenant?" addressing Cheriton, who secretly adored her, yet felt he had no chance of winning against Claverling.

"I wish a dance was going to take place every evening for the next six months," he replied, eagerly.

"Now, do you really? Why?"

"Because I should have a chance of seeing you every night," he returned, ardently, though in lower tones meant only for her ear.

"Oh, nonsense!" she said, quickly, a slight accession of colour in her cheeks, for she did not care for Cheriton's attention when Claverling was present.

The Popplechicks had discovered that the former had only three hundred a-year, and that he was, moreover, the son of a man who had made his money out of pork! Now, what did they want with pork? Why, certainly nothing, they had had enough of bacon.

So the girls, especially Popsey, had orders to discourage Cheriton, while there was a chance of Claverling proposing, an order which was strictly obeyed.

"Do you know," declared the girl turning to the Captain, to put a stop to the Lieutenant's rhapsodies, "that I think the Dashers are a very shabby set!"

"Do you?" said both men, laughing at her impertinence, for she looked so charming, her head resting on a blue satin pillow across which the soft rings and curls of auburn hair strayed, that they could not feel angry or offended.

"Why?"

"Because you haven't given any entertainment since you have been stationed here."

"Oh! come now," expostulated Cheriton. "We have a guest night once a week, and always have several fellows then."

"What good does that do to us? We women are not invited."

"No, that's true. You see it would hardly do to invite—"

"Us to mess—eh?"

"Exactly so."

"Perhaps we would not care to come."

"I should think not," he said, quickly, catching at any excuse. "Of course you would not."

"But, still, we should like to come to a ball if you gave one, in that delightful big room. Why don't you?"

"I don't know. I don't see why we shouldn't—do you, Cecil?"

"Eh! What?" asked the Captain, rousing up suddenly from a day-dream in which Clara figured.

"Why shouldn't Ours give a ball?"

"I don't know, my dear fellow, unless it is that the Colonel, being a married man, has so much domestic bliss that he does not care for the gaieties of society."

"He should think of we poor bachelors," declared the younger man, with a comical look full into Popsey's blue eyes.

"Perhaps he will if you make the suggestion to him."

"I shan't fail to do that, you may be sure."

"And you'll try and get his consent, too, Captain," she urged, with all the pertinacity and audacity of a pretty woman.

"Need you ask?" he said, gallantly; "your word is my law. You may look upon the ball as a settled affair."

"Then you have permission to inscribe my

name on your card for the first dance," answered Popsey, grandly.

"Thanks. I shall not fail to avail myself of that gracious permission," laughed Cecil, as he took his leave with Cheriton, and left the girls in convalescence as to how they could drag money out of their unfortunate father to buy grand new dresses for this promised military festivity.

CHAPTER V.

CLAVERING was as good as his word, and early in June a day was fixed for the ball to take place at the Belfast Barracks.

All Bridlington was in a state of excitement, for all the folk who were any way in society had been invited. It was to be a mixed gathering to a certain extent.

The exclusive county-folk were to meet the town gentry; to rub shoulders with them; actually to dance in the same room. This was well known, yet the exclusives never thought of refusing. They came from far and near, from all parts of the county.

Lines of carriages wended their way towards the barracks between the hours of nine and ten. Groups of gorgeously attired matrons and thinly-clad maidens swept up the staircase lined by the Dashers into the brightly-lighted, flower-filled rooms, where they were greeted by Colonel Turner and the officers of the regiment, and where the walls were adorned with trophies of guns, bayonets, pistols, and at one end with the colours, while in the supper and refreshment-rooms the magnificent regimental gold plate was displayed, bearing Dunster's confecting triumphs on some of it. What a gay scene it was!

Red coats and black, mingling with the white, blue, green, yellow, mauve, brown, and black dresses of the ladies, who had wisely eschewed pink and scarlet toilets.

In the middle of the room couples glided gracefully and evenly along, or bounced, and pranced, and bumped against others according to their capabilities, over the polished boards. Around the door were grouped the more exclusive of the county gentlemen, while ranged along the wall were husband-seeking mammas, and portly, diamond-decked dowagers, who had under their protecting wings their marriageable chicks, some of whom, however, were no longer chicks but veritable old hens.

The Popplechick brood were looking very well, even down to Pen, who, by the aid of a little rouge, had managed to disguise her sallow skin, and get up a complexion for the occasion; while Popsey was absolutely radiant. So radiant, in fact, that Claverling forgot the annoyance he had felt at being let in for the first dance with her, and led her out to valse as the band of the regiment struck up "Sighs of the Soul," without giving a thought to the magnificent *Mère P.*, who, gorgeous in pale green silk and nodding plumes, attracted universal attention and wonder.

"That was delightful," sighed Popsey, ecstatically, as the last bars sounded.

"I am glad you liked it!" returned Cecil, just a trifle inattentively.

The truth was he was watching for the arrival of the Heron's Court party, in order that he might bear down at once on Clara, and secure her programme before other fellows got a chance of scoring up hard.

"Such a delightful band! Such a smooth floor, and all got up to please me, wasn't it?"

"Of course," he agreed, smiling down into the pretty, upturned face, a smile which Clara, entering at that moment on her father's arm, saw and wondered at, asking herself was it possible Claverling could care for this pretty, underbred girl, after all the pointed, unmistakable things he had said to her.

"Get me some coffee, please," said his partner, quickly, her sharp eyes having caught sight of Miss Hartdyke's handsome face, and determining at any cost to detain "Beauty" at her side for awhile.

"Oh, certainly. Forgive me for not asking

you before," he returned, readily, though he was a trifle annoyed at having to leave the dancing-room just then, and miss the chance he was waiting for.

However, he took his partner to the coffee-room, procured her all she wanted, and waited with great patience while she dawdled with the cake, and played with her spoon.

"I suppose you are engaged for this!" he remarked as the band struck up "Under the Stars."

"Yes, to Mr. Cheriton," she acknowledged, reluctantly, as she put down the cup, and took his proffered arm.

"He has a treat in store. You dance very well, Popsey."

"I am glad you think so, Beauty," she whispered, giving his arm a squeeze that was something more than friendly. "And—aren't you going to ask me for any more?"

"Of course," he responded, holding out his hand for her card. "How many may I have?"

"As many as you like."

"Good girl. Only I mustn't be selfish and take too many, or I shall have the other fellows down on me."

"Better than the other fellows!" exclaimed the girl, the thin veneer of recently acquired good manners giving way under her desire to secure as her cavalier for the evening the handsomest of the Dashers.

"Ah, poor Cheriton! Here he comes. I will resign you to his care," and he went off in no end of a hurry, for he saw Clara Hardyke at the upper end of the room, surrounded and besieged by officers, civilians, clergymen, fox-hunters, barristers, rich and poor, young and old. All by one consent clustered round her, thus proclaiming her belle of the ball, a title she well deserved, for she looked simply lovely. Her round, polished throat was bare, and the greater part of her snowy arms, while her beautiful dark hair was guiltless of a single ornament, save one small lily bud.

"Miss Hardyke, may I see your card?" he asked, eagerly.

"With pleasure," she said, handing him the dainty programme, already half filled with names.

"You seem rather full," he remarked with evident discontent.

"Am I?" she said, quietly, not forgetting the smile she had seen on first coming in.

"Yes. Look," displaying the card, "the next five are taken."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. And you promised me the second."

"The second is now being danced. You did not come for it in time."

"There is time now," he said, quickly. "It is mine. Come! Do not let us miss it," and putting his arm round her waist he swung her away right down the length of the room, without waiting for permission.

"I see you carry my bouquet," looking at the splendid bouquet of choice white blooms that she held.

"Yes," she assented, with a lovely blush and smile. "They are beautiful."

"And who sent you these?" touching the lilies on her billowy gown.

"Major Harvey."

"Oh!" while a frown disfigured his face. "I was not aware that he was an intimate friend of yours."

"No!"

"Nor that he has sent you flowers."

"No."

"And—I don't like it."

"Captain Claverling!"

"Well, Miss Hardyke," he said, coolly.

"Am I not at liberty to accept flowers from anyone but you?" she asked, in offended tones.

"Certainly you are," he returned, promptly. "Only I would much rather you did not. And I am jealous," he whispered lower, "of even these lilies, and horribly so of those fellows who have taken the dances that ought to be mine."

"You should have been in time," she murmured, mollified and embarrassed.

"Let me make up for it now; let me have all the dances that are left."

"There are too many running," she observed. "No matter," he urged, "give them to me."

"My father would not like me to do anything so marked, I am sure."

"I wish I had the right to take every dance on your card, and strike every name out," he said, boldly, glancing at the beautiful, blushing face, and downcast lids. "As it is," he went on after a moment's silence, "I must take what you will give me. Don't be unmerciful—Clara."

"I could not be that to you," she said, softly, thrilling at the sound of her name from his lips.

"I hope you won't be. I shall want you to be very, very merciful to me at no very distant date. And—now about the present important thing. May I have all those dances that are not running?"

"Yes," she agreed, too embarrassed by his pointed allusion to the proposal he meant to make her to object.

Just as he had finished scoring up Haviland Harvey came across to where they stood, and with considerable *empressment* asked for dances.

"I hope I am not too late," he remarked as he held out his hand for the card, which Cecil reluctantly yielded.

"No, I believe there are some left," declared Miss Hardyke.

"Three," rejoined the Major, scanning the programme.

"Is that all?" in astonishment.

"Yes. Is it too many to ask for?" he pleaded.

"I must keep one," she responded.

"Then two dances are all I have to look forward to this evening!" sighed Harvey, moving away, and leaving the two whom he looked upon as lovers alone.

His opinion was shared by a good many people that night, but others thought Popsey Popplechick stood a good chance, as the gallant Captain was seen dancing with her several times. The truth was, that she and Clara were about the only two in the room who danced well, and Cecil being particular about his partners did not care to exert himself, and drag about a female oak-tree; so when he was not dancing with Popsey he danced with Clara, and vice-versa, and when they were both engaged stood in the doorway with the male wall-flowers and looked on.

At last the ball came to an end, and about the last to leave were the Popplechicks. The Squire had taken his daughter away some time before, and so Cecil had consoled himself towards the end of the evening exclusively with Popsey.

"Has he proposed?" asked Mrs. Popplechick, as soon as the fly-door was shut.

"Not actually yet, but he will soon," returned her youngest daughter, confidently. "He said quite enough to give me a hold on him to-night."

Which was the truth. Flashed with champagne, of which he had taken a trifle too much, excited and careless, he had talked folly to the girl, and she had led him on to jest and trifle, and while he meant nothing she had chosen to take it seriously, and meant to tell him so the next day, play a desperate card, and win if she could.

He had given a half promise to row her out in his skiff the next day, and she sent the skinny Buttons early with a letter to the barracks, so worded that he felt somehow or other he had committed himself to a certain extent; and so he went down to meet her on the beach, meaning to explain everything, but she looked so pretty in her boating costume, and had managed so cleverly—for the man who kept his boat had it all ready—that he could not get out of the fix, and had to take her.

She chatted away gaily, and did her best to amuse him, succeeding so well that they were rowing about for a long time, and when he turned to go ashore he found the tide had run out so far that there was no chance of being able to land anywhere save at the pier steps.

He muttered a naughty word as he realised

this, and knew what it meant at one o'clock in the morning.

The pier would be crowded by all the *dile* of Bridlington. Everyone would see him come in alone with Popsey Popplechick.

Was there ever such luck! What the deuce had he been thinking of?

However, there was no help for it, so he turned the skiff's nose round, and rowed steadily at the pier head in grim silence while his companion sat equally silent in the stern, trailing her pink fingers through the snow-tipped waves.

It was worse than he had pictured it. The pier was simply thronged with idlers, who stared at him pointedly as he came up the steps with his fair companion; and then—horror of horrors!—Mrs. Popplechick, Penelope, Susan and Mary Ann emerged from the crowd, followed by Popplechick, and greeted them effusively.

"My dear Cecil, we may call you Cecil now," commenced the mother in loud tones that made him wince; "where have you been all this time, with your darling Popsey?"

"On the briny ocean," he returned, jocosely, trying to steady his nerves—trying to be equal to the occasion.

"Ah! truant," shaking the finger of a bright blue glove in his face, "we've been young housewives, we can understand, can't we, Joshua?"

"Of course we can, my love," returned the unattractive retired cheesemonger, who had been brought out on purpose to play his part in the comedy, or rather tragedy, for it was that to Claverling. A little folly, what had it brought him to! He began to realise what, as he heard Joshua going on.

"Of course we can understand; still Captive Claverling must explain his intentions, as no doubt he will."

"Well, at any rate I can't explain them here," said the "Captive," irritably. "Perhaps we had better adjourn to your house. This is hardly the sort of place to discuss private matters," and he looked so fierce that Joshua meekly faced round, and walked down the pier towards Sunlight Villa beside his wife, his three eldest daughters coming next, and Cecil and Popsey bringing up the rear.

The girl, however, did not look or feel triumphant. There was something in her supposed lover's set white face that cowed her. She felt, perhaps, she had made a mistake, and not being a bad-hearted girl, only vain and frivolous, she kept silent, and said never a word, as they traversed the length of the pier, meeting nearly everyone they knew, and, amongst others, Squire Hardyke and his daughter.

Claverling drew his breath hard as they came near. Only last night he had said things to this graceful, high-bred woman that were tantamount to a proposal, and now here he was following in the wake of Mr. and Mrs. Popplechick, like a tame bear, side by side with Popsey, and all Bridlington was talking of his having been out for hours in a boat alone with her.

He turned deathly white, even to his lips, but managed to lift his hat with his accustomed ease, and then passed on, full of shame, anger, and regret.

CHAPTER VI.

"WHAT would Lady Anne say?"

Over and over again Cecil Claverling asked himself this question. What would she say? Here was he, last scion of an old race, engaged, actually engaged, to Popsey Popplechick, whose parents could not even lay claim to "H's," and were vulgarly itself!

He hadn't meant anything in his flirtation with the girl; certainly nothing matrimonially, and now here he was caught, bound hand and foot.

It was horrible!

"What would Lady Anne say?"

"What should he do?"

While he was thus pacing restlessly to and fro the door opened, and Haviland Harvey came in, looking unusually grave and serious.

"Is this true that I hear, Cecil?" he asked.

"If you mean my engagement to Popsey Popplechick," groaned the other, "it is."

"Good Heavens! You can't mean it!"

The Major seemed petrified at this confirmation of his worst fears.

"I do though, worst luck."

"What—what is the meaning of your conduct?" and Harvey stared blankly into his friend's face.

"I don't know."

"Do you mean to marry this girl, this Popsey Popplechick?" with an air of unutterable disgust.

"I suppose I shall have to; I see no way out of it."

"But how did it all come about?"

"I hardly know, Havi. The girl's deucedly pretty, and threw herself at my head. I flirted with her, meaning nothing; and last night, after a cham, she says I asked her to marry me. I don't remember doing so, and then this morning she sent a queer kind of letter to me, and I went down to the beach meaning to explain everything, only she was too quick for me. She'd told the man to get my boat ready; and not liking to make a fuss I took her out, and then had to land at the pier. Everyone saw us come in, and that old cad, Popplechick, asked my 'intentions,' said I had ruined his daughter's reputation, that there was only one thing I could do, etc., etc., and so Popsey is my bride-elect."

"Clavering, what folly!"

"Worse than folly," groaned the young man, covering his face with his hands, "for I love another woman!"

"Cecil!" exclaimed Harvey, turning whiter than his friend. "Are my worst fears to be realised? Have you engaged Miss Hartdyke's affections?"

"I fear so."

"Oh, Heaven!"

It was like a moan of anguish, for Haviland Harvey secretly loved Clara Hartdyke, and hopelessly, for his affection had sharpened his eyes, and he knew she cared for Clavering with all the intenseness of her calm, yet powerful nature, and he understood what her pain would be at his unworthiness.

"Help me!" exclaimed Clavering, dashing down his hands, and crossing over to his friend.

"Help me, Harvey. I can't bear that she should think me a blackguard!"

"What can I do?" asked the other, in low tones.

"Tell her something of the truth. Let her know how I have been caught and trapped—how cruelly hard my life will be lived apart from her!"

"It will be a delicate and difficult matter to broach such a subject to her."

"Granted. Still I believe, unfortunately, she loves me, and it may be some consolation to her to know that my baseness is not voluntary, that my heart is here now and always. Promise me, promise to help me! Oh, Heaven! I think I shall go mad!"

"There, don't get excited; I promise I'll do my best with Miss Hartdyke. She shall think as well of you as I can make her."

"Thanks—thanks. You will win my everlasting gratitude," declared Beauty, pouring out a tumbler of brandy, and tossing it off at one draught.

"That sort of thing won't mend matters," remarked the Major, drily, putting the spirit-frame on the sideboard. "You had better leave brandy alone. And now I want a little serious conversation with you."

"Yes!"

"Do you know anything of the antecedents of your intended wife?"

"I know nothing, my dear fellow."

"Humph! A pity you didn't make some inquiries before you committed yourself to a proposal."

"I shall never believe that I did so."

"Well, at any rate, you are engaged."

"Undoubtedly. And now what have you heard?"

"That old Popplechick is a retired cheesemonger, and not long ago kept a small shop at Hillington."

"Oh, Harvey!" with a doleful groan, "what am I to do?"

"I don't know—at any rate yet; and I also don't know what Lady Anne will say!"

"Neither do I. I shall never have courage to tell her. Harvey, the best thing I can do is to put a bullet through my brain, and so end my troubles."

"Don't talk like that, Cecil," returned the other, sternly, "but let us think what can be done. My informant was the cashier at Dunsters'. It appears he was a lover of Miss Popsey's in former days, and followed her here in loving despair."

"Do you think he'd take her off my hands?"

"He would be only too glad to if he got the chance. But Joshua won't have him as a son-in-law. He told me, though—and of course his hopeless passion has made him pretty keen where she is concerned—that you are not the man she really cares for."

"In Heaven's name who is he then? He might help me out of the scrape."

"Digby Cheriton."

"Ah! He might suit her and she him, if it could be managed."

"That is what I thought."

"Only his income is hundreds, where mine is thousands."

"Exactly, and naturally old Popplechick prefers you. Still, the young lady is wilful, and might, if judiciously managed, take the law into her own hand. We must see what can be done."

And then, after a little more talk, the friends separated.

A fortnight dragged on slowly enough to Clavering, and, if the truth must be known, not very cheerfully to his intended. Her victory was hardly a triumphant one.

He was a very cool lover, came seldom to the house, and then was cold and distant to her family, and barely civil to her. All her pretty little ways and graces were lost on him, and as she really did not love him she grew just a trifle impatient of his manner; and as all were fish that came to her net, turned her blue eyes on Cheriton, who flattered about her like the proverbial moth round the candle. Then Major Harvey often said nasty, stinging little things, showing that he knew all about Jimmy Smith and the double Gloucester, and in the end she felt nearly as angry with her mother for having forced her into this unenviable position as Cecil was.

He could hardly bear it. Everyone stared at him; his friends chafed, Mrs. Popplechick was affectionately familiar, and, worse than all, Clara Hartdyke looked at him with contempt in her soft eyes.

This almost drove him out of his senses, and one afternoon, when on the pier with Popsey, after encountering a coolly contemptuous look from the beautiful eyes he loved so well, he rushed off, without any excuse to his fiancée, to the barracks, and telling his groom to saddle Ajax, set off across the country for a wild gallop.

On he went over hedges and ditches, riding recklessly over everything, finally putting the horse at a tremendously high-barred gate. The animal rose gallantly to the desperate jump, but just caught his feet on the top rail, and then threw his rider heavily, straight on his head on the hard, flinty road. The inmates of a little cottage opposite rushed out, and, lifting up the injured man, carried him into their humble abode.

Clavering, like most of the Dasher's officers, was well known; and Mrs. Merton, who had been nurse to Clara Hartdyke, and whose cottage was on the Squire's estate, and not half-a-mile from Heron's Court, sent her son down there at once with the bad news.

Major Harvey happened to be there. He had called, and was explaining matters to Miss Hartdyke; and it was fortunate, as she staggered, and would have fallen, when she heard who it was lay like a dead man at Myrtle Cottage. Recovering herself, however, with great rapidity, she gave several orders to the servants, sent, by the Major's advice, a groom into the barracks for the regimental doctor; and, accompanied by her

father and Haviland Harvey, started at once to Widow Merton's, to give what help she could to her quondam lover.

Cecil's injuries were very severe. He was unconscious for weeks, and it was only the old nurse's incessant and careful nursing, ably seconded by Clara, to whom it was a labour of love, that brought him round after a long time.

Oddly enough, Popsey Popplechick, after one visit, did not appear at the cottage again, until Clavering, still languid and weak, was sitting or rather reclining on the old-fashioned chintz-covered sofa by the open window, one August day, enjoying the mingled perfumes of roses, mignonette, and sweet-pea, that the soft wind wafted in from the trim garden, and staring rather dully at the distant glimpse of the blue sunlit sea.

Perhaps his friend, the Major, had been at the bottom of this seemingly strange neglect, and perhaps, also, it was he who brought Popsey up that summer afternoon, and pushed her a bit unceremoniously into the invalid's room. However, she came there; there she was, standing before him in a white dress, looking very pretty and very bashful, as she twisted her pocket-handkerchief to and fro in her fingers, and blurted out that she "really couldn't help it. He would marry her."

"My dear girl, what do you mean?" asked Cecil, indifferently.

"Hasn't the Major told you about me—about us?"

"He has told me nothing."

"Well, then I suppose I must. He let me know pretty plainly after your accident that you didn't care for me, and thought yourself trapped and caught, as perhaps you were, only mother did good as so to marry, and marry well; and then Digby, Mr. Cheriton, you know, made love to me, and I did really care for him; and so—last week—we were married."

"My dear Mrs. Cheriton, allow me to offer you my best and heartiest congratulations," cried Clavering, joyfully.

"Thanks. Of course you're delighted to be free, and as she's dying of love for you," with a backward jerk of her pretty, pert head, "and you care for her, it's all right enough."

"Who is she?"

"Miss Hartdyke, of course. Oh, there! I've let it out, and the Major told me not to," and, covered with confusion, Mrs. Cheriton ran out of the room as fast as she could.

"Well, are you satisfied?" asked Harvey, entering a moment later.

"My dear, dear friend, I can't thank you half enough for your good offices to me," cried the Captain, shaking his hand warmly.

"Don't try to, and do keep quiet, or you'll make yourself ill again."

"I shall be all right now. Only tell me," with a glance at the door, "am I to have no more visitors to-day?"

"I shall see how you go on. Towards evening if you are cool and calm, you shall."

Clavering never quite knew how he passed the hours till the dusk of the summer evening began to fall over land, sea, and sky, but then a soft tread crossed the room, and a graceful figure stood beside him.

"Miss Hartdyke—Clara," he murmured, trying to rise to his feet, "can you ever forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," she answered, gently, as he caught her hands in both his, and held them in a clasp so tight that it was positive pain, while his eyes devoured her face.

"Can you mean that? Do you really forgive? You know I am free now; I may speak of my love!"

"Yes, I know," she whispered, the crimson tide surging through her veins, dying cheek and brow with a bright flush.

"Clara!" he cried, emboldened by the blush, drawing her down to his side. "What is this? May I hope?" and he looked straight down into the soft, upraised brown eyes.

That glance was enough. It told him she was unchanged—was still his; and a light of great joy came into his face, as he clasped her in his

arms, and took the kiss he had craved so long from the lips that now were his.

[THE END.]

THE DUKE OF YORK AS A SAILOR.

As H.R.H. the Duke of York is soon to be created a rear-admiral of the fleet, the timely article which appears in this month's *Windsor*, dealing with the twenty-two years' naval career of our future king, will be read with especial interest. "The first command which the Duke of York held in the Royal Navy," says the writer, "was in 1889, when he was appointed to the charge of a first-class torpedo boat. His next advance, in 1890, was to the gunboat, the *Thrush*, but on the 26th of August, 1891, his Royal Highness was gazetted commander, and soon afterwards was given the charge of a second-class cruiser, H.M.S. *Melampus*. In 1898 he rose to the command of H.M.S. *Crescent*, one of the finest first-class cruisers that the British Navy possesses. In choosing the sea as a profession the Duke of York is but following the example of many of his ancestors. Our first Sailor Prince was Prince Rupert, grandson of James I., who commanded British Fleets in the Dutch wars of 1666 and 1673. Then there was James, Duke of York, brother of Charles II., who had the direct command and leadership of the English Fleet at those battles fought in 1665 and 1672 off Lowestoft and Solebay respectively, when the English flag triumphed over the Dutch. It has been pointed out as a curious coincidence that our present Duke of York's birthday, June 3, 1865, was to a day the two hundredth anniversary of his naval ancestor's first great battle at sea, the victory at Lowestoft of June 3, 1665."

HOW COTTON IS BLEACHED.

"We all know," writes Mr. John Foster Fraser in his article upon "Life in a Lancashire Cotton Mill," which is one of the foremost contributions to this month's *Windsor*, "the old-fashioned—and to my thinking the best—means of bleaching, namely, exposing the cotton to the atmosphere. Now, however, a solution of chlorine does quickly what unassisted Nature takes several weeks to accomplish. Here, again, in respect to bleaching, as in respect to everything else, all the work is done by machinery. It was considered a great thing when each piece of cotton could be bleached by chlorine. But this is far too slow, according to modern notions; so a thousand or more pieces are fastened end to end, and twenty or twenty-five miles of cotton are bleached at one and the same time. First of all comes the washing. The cloth is put into a cylinder, which wheels round quickly, and the various partitions knock the material about and so cleanse it. If the cotton goes on the market white, then it is not necessary to wash it so absolutely pure as it is when it is to be printed upon. Pieces are then fastened together to the extent of many miles, a stamp being put on each to distinguish the owner. All over the surface of the cotton are little pieces of fluff, and unnecessary thread ends which must be got rid of. This is usually done by running it over hot copper, underneath which a fire is burning. Sometimes, however, the singeing is done by a mixture of coal gas and air. The cloth is hurried past the flame at the rate of sixty yards a minute, and while passing at this speed the fluff and the threads are burned away. This done, the cotton is subjected to boiling. It is pressed into a vat through which pipes pass, and boiling water is forced through the cotton. After this it is thought well to give it another washing. When the water has been squeezed out, the cotton is packed away in stills of hydrochloric acid for the space of several hours, to get rid of any lime or soap there may be in it. Once more the cotton is boiled, and by this time, as it ought to be, it begins to show signs of becoming really white. Next, it is put in a solution of bleaching powder, to undergo what is called 'chemicking.' A good dose of sulphuric acid, followed up by more washing, makes the cotton about as white as it is ever likely to be."

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

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CHAPTER X.

WHEN Cyril Vere turned away from the door of Somerville Hall he felt decidedly cross.

He had given up many things in order to compass this visit to his cousin, and he had disappointed no less than two ladies and one man by going out for a long, lonely ride on the last day of his stay. And all for what? To leave a piece of pasteboard on a hall-table, and ride back again with the delusive hope of meeting her at every turn.

He came upon Meta, followed by the groom leading Somerville's horse, but as it was long since they had met, neither was much the wiser, and he went on with the ungallant thought in his mind that the girl's horse was better looking than his rider.

In order to spare his own beast he rode slowly, and when the storm came on took refuge in the "Red Ploughshare."

He was there when the stable-boy came in shouting,—

"A carriage, quick, for the Tower! Look sharp, or he'll be in an awful wax!"

And he had just passed the gate of the Tower when the dog-cart came out, and looking back over his shoulder in idle curiosity he saw the girl whom he had come so far to see seated by the side of Godfrey Somerville.

He wheeled his horse round, thinking that his eyes must have deceived him, although he knew well enough that there was not another woman in Blankshire whom he could have mistaken for Nella Maynard.

He stared after them with blank amazement; so far from home, in that secluded spot, alone with a man about whom many curious reports were rife. It seemed incredible!

The butler said distinctly that the two ladies had gone out together for a ride, and yet here was one of them separated from the other, and in a cart instead of on horseback. It looked like a secret assignation; but Nella was not the sort of girl to consent to such a thing, and even if she had wished to, how could she have rid herself of her companion? Perplexed and amazed, he reached Desden Chase with such a gloomy expression on his face that some of them thought he had "popped" to his cousin and been refused.

"Well, here you are old fellow!" cried Jack Arkwright, a young man with a stout, sturdy figure, and bright, good-humoured face, as he came out on to the steps to greet his friend. "Only just in time for a B.-and-S. before starting. Oh, by the bye, Dulcie wants to speak to you in the study. I told her that you couldn't wait, so you needn't go unless you like. How did Bella behave in the storm?"

"Not so badly. Turned up her nose at it, and her heels as well," and Cyril Vere, quickly dismounting, threw the reins to a groom who had run out of the stable-yard, and putting his hand affectionately on Jack's shoulder, turned his face towards the study.

"Time's precious. Secure your B.-and-S. first, before you go in for a jaw," expostulated the brother, who could not conceive that there was any particular attraction, especially for a thirty man, in an interview with his sister.

"Ladies first," said Cyril, with a smile, as he turned the handle of the door, and gave his friend a nod which meant dismissal.

Dulcie, a beautiful girl with large pensive eyes, came towards him eagerly.

"I thought you were never coming, and I longed to say one word to you before you went."

"Say half-a-dozen," looking down into her upturned face, his own full of tenderness and pity. "You know I always like to listen."

"I think you do, because you are so kind, so true. If you hear anything you will let me know, even if it is bad news," clasping her slender hands together. "I would rather know the worst."

"You shall hear everything. Even if there is nothing I will write to say so"—a most magnani-

mous assertion, as he had an unconquerable objection to putting pen to paper.

"But you think you have a clue!"

"I think so," slowly. "But you know I never was a detective!"

"But you put your heart into everything you try!"

"When it is to please a woman," with a courteous bow.

"Say a friend, because I am sure you would do the same for Jack."

"Of course I would; but then I look upon Jack as my second self."

"A compliment to him, poor boy, for I don't think he has a thought beyond the stable."

"Don't be in a hurry. He will have a wise head by the time he has to use it."

"Then he ought to have it now!" with a sigh.

"If he had only been a little more thoughtful I might have applied to him for help instead of you."

"And so grudged me a pleasure which I would not have lost for the world!" with a sunny smile.

"Jack said you had something to say to me. Are you keeping it back?"

"Only that if he could come to London," hanging her head, and dropping her voice almost to a whisper, "I would go up and see him. It may be wrong, but I can't help it."

Cyril looked down into the lovely eyes filled to the brim with tears, and stretching out his sun-burnt hand he took hers into his strong grasp and kept it.

"When you want to go send for me, and I will take you. Promise me, Miss Arkwright, that you will!"

"Only too gladly. If you only knew what a weight you take off my mind!"

"If you only knew what pleasure you gave me! And now I must be off. There's Jack calling me. Good-bye! Keep up your courage, and hope for the best."

"How selfish I am! I forgot to ask if you saw your cousin!"

His face changed from sympathy to sternness.

"Yes, I saw her."

"And wasn't she delighted to see you?"

"I don't think she would have been if she had."

Good-bye!

Before she could ask another question he had gone, and the room seemed dark and lonely without his pleasant voice and stalwart figure.

The brandy-and-soda was waiting for him in the hall, his trunks were already in the dog-cart, and Jack was standing outside talking to the groom. Mrs. Arkwright, a gentle old lady, was nodding over a book in the drawing-room when Cyril rushed in to thank her for her hospitality, and to take his leave.

At first she was quite bewildered, but she recovered herself by the time he had shaken hands with two young ladies who were staying in the house, and murmured in an audible voice,—

"A very nice, gentlemanly man—I wish Dulcie had a husband just like him!"

The girls tittered and looked at each other, but Vere was grave as any judge who never cracked jokes to amuse the bar.

To him Dulcie Arkwright was a sacred subject, who ought to be as far removed from common "chaff" as one pole is from another. He could not tolerate a smile when produced at her expense, but turned his back rigidly on his offenders.

"Are you going to drive me, Jack? That is kind," as he took his place in the dog-cart by his side.

"Thought I would see you safe off the premises," flicking the whip in a knowing manner.

"When shall you turn up again?"

"Christmas! Will that be too soon?"

"Not till then!" with a face of dismay.

"What have we done to you that you wish to throw us over!"

"You have been awfully kind; but I can't get leave, simply because I am wanting to see you. Can you tell me anything about that curious looking place on the way here from Somerville?"

"Marwood Court," said Jack, promptly.

"Owner had the largest racing stud in the southern counties. Came to grief though, and

had to bring all the thoroughbreds to the hammer."

"I mean a very different kind of place. By peering over the hedge you catch a glimpse of a grey-stone tower. Any horses that were brought up there would die of the megrims!"

"I have it! 'Nun's Tower.' There is a tradition that an unfortunate creature, in the days when it was a convent, was built up in the wall. I could swear I heard her screams myself when I pass it late at night."

"Imagination under the effects of 'cham.'"

"No, by Jove! when I've been as sober as a church. At any rate, there is a very peculiar noise, which makes your hair stand on end when you hear it!"

"And does your horse stand on end as well? because that might be awkward."

"Kingfisher bolted, I remember that."

"And who is the owner?"

"Nobody knows."

"Not Godfrey Somerville, I suppose?"

"What could have put that in your head?"

"I saw him come out of it to-day, that's all."

"You did!" excitedly. "Was he alone?"

"No."

"Male or female?"

"A lady."

"Humph—that's odd. There are all sorts of stories about. Some say he has a prisoner there, whom he keeps shut up all day, but lets out at night."

"Who? Not Somerville?"

"Not that I know of. The owner, whoever it be. Some say it is his wife, whom he quarrelled with on the day of their marriage; and some say that it is quite empty of ordinary mortals, but full of ghosts. You can believe what you like!"

"I should like to get to the bottom of it," said Vere, musingly. "It is odd that there should be a mysterious house like that in such a populous neighbourhood."

"But you see it lies on the outskirts of everything. You don't pass it on the way to anywhere. You only happened to see it to-day because you went out of your way to find shelter at the 'Red Ploughshare.'"

"But other people must go out of their way sometimes as well as myself."

"Once a year, perhaps; but they needn't be as inquisitive as you are."

"I tell you what, old fellow, the next time I am down in these parts you and I will make some excuse to see the inside of that building. We will manage it somehow, unmask the criminal, free the prisoner, and turn out the ghosts!"

"All right, I'm your man. But I only bargain for one thing—that it shall be in broad daylight, and not after dusk."

"Before breakfast if you like."

"That won't do. We might find the hidden beauty in her curl-papers, and I should like to see her at her best."

"Is there no chance, seriously, of there being a respectable mistress of the house?" biting his mustaches, as he thought of Nella Maynard, the purest-hearted girl in the world alone in that dismal house with Godfrey Somerville—a man whom he had always distrusted, and never liked.

"If there had been we must have seen her. How could such a person remain hidden all these years?"

"She might be a great invalid."

"Then she would have the doctor, and little what's-his-name would have let the whole county into her confidence. If Somerville has a finger in the pie, depend upon it there's some disreputable secret behind the scenes!"

"I'm afraid there is," with a sudden sigh.

"What the deuce does it matter to you?" looking at him curiously.

"Matter! How could it?" reddening suspiciously.

"Are you going in for the Somerville Stakes?"

"I've forgotten what she's like."

"Don't you? You must look at her pocket, and not at her face. She is rather like a staid dumpling without the currants—no colour and

no expression, but a jolly lot of freckles over all."

"Sounds attractive! but here we are. I must look out for the heiress next Christmas."

"By Jove, there's the train! You must run for it."

Vere jumped down, nodded and disappeared into the booking-office, whilst a porter hurried after him with his trunks.

As he took his place, Jack waved his hand to him from the road, then drove away at a rapid pace.

The train steamed slowly out of the station, and he leant forward with a sudden impulse, anxious to catch a last glimpse of the fair English landscape amongst whose woods and hills the magnet was hidden that kept him fixed to England, when common-sense told him that there was a wider field and a better prospect over the seas in India.

CHAPTER XL.

"META, where are you! Come out and keep me company whilst I smoke a pipe!"

Godfrey Somerville was the speaker, and he leant his back against the frame of the boudoir-window, as he leisurely proceeded to fill his pipe with tobacco, waiting for his commands to be obeyed.

Meta rose with less alacrity than usual, and proceeded to pack up her wools.

"The sun is very hot; you will probably get a sun-stroke," observed Nella, as she looked up from a drawing.

"I think I am capable of taking care of my cousin," said Godfrey, crossly.

"Capable, perhaps, if you gave your mind to it."

"And is there any reason why I shouldn't?"

"How can I tell? You always look as if you had the affairs of the universe to think over."

He frowned.

"My own affairs are quite enough to occupy me. I wish you thought the same of yours."

"Perhaps Nella's bean ideal is a man who is always laughing!" and Meta, having packed up her work, hurried out of the room.

"And perhaps I haven't a bean ideal at all," murmured Nella to herself, as she put her head on one side to get a better view of her drawing.

"Not ideal, but real. I know exactly what he would be like—a man who looked as if he spent all his odd moments in brushing his hair, and kept a stock of compliments on hand ready to humbug any girl who would listen to him." And Godfrey gave a short laugh which had no mirth in it.

"Better than the man who looked as if he had only just tumbled out of bed," with a scornful glance at Somerville's black hair, which had a habit of falling untidily over his forehead; "and thought that insults were the cayenne pepper of conversation!"

"I don't agree with you; the one's a fool, the other—"

"What where you going to say—a nob!"

His frown grew into a scowl.

"You can call me so if you like."

"I couldn't. It wouldn't be polite."

"I never knew you stand about that before."

"Then you never guessed what restraint I put upon myself every day that I am in your company!" looking up with an air of surprise.

"Restraint be hanged! You always say what you think, and so do I."

"Excuse me. I think a great deal more than I say."

"Do you? Then I should be sorry to have your thoughts."

"Perhaps they would be better than yours."

"What do you know of mine!" sharply, though he turned his eyes towards the garden.

"Nothing, I am glad to say. Only you look rather like a second Eugene Aram. You haven't murdered anyone really, and tried to bury him under movable dead leaves!" She spoke in jest, and, though meaning to tease, was horrified at the effect she produced.

Beside himself with rage, he flung his pipe down upon the gravel, smashing it into fragments, and entering the room with rapid strides seized her by the shoulder.

"Mr. Somerville!" she cried, with a little gasp, for she was literally frightened by the expression of his face.

He looked as if he would have liked to shake her to pieces, but gradually his grasp relaxed.

"You are a fiend," he growled between his clenched teeth, "a nasty, vicious little fiend, but I am a fool to allow myself to be provoked by an idle tongue like yours."

The door opened, and in came Meta with her garden hat on her head, and a pair of dog-skin gloves in her hand. Her eyes went suspiciously from one to the other, for Somerville was standing close to Nella's chair and the girl's cheeks were crimson with a sudden revulsion of feeling from terror to anger.

"Come here, little one," said Godfrey, his tone now as much like his former one as June is to January. He put his arm round her carelessly, and drew her gently to his side. "I was just telling Miss Maynard that the corner of the house was quite out of perspective."

The sketch was one of the Hall, taken from the right side of the lawn, and was done in a bold, vigorous style, rather as if the artist had been a man than a woman.

"I never knew you interest yourself in a drawing before," said Meta, jealously.

"You see I could not resist an opportunity of finding fault with Miss Maynard."

"I never heard you make any remark about it," said Nella, coolly, determined not to countenance him in any device to which she was not pledged by her promise.

"Or perhaps you would not listen!" and Meta smiled. "I think you might find something more interesting to sketch than our commonplace abode. Shall we try and discover that gloomy place you were talking about with Somers?"

"What place?" said Somerville, quickly. Feeling that his eyes were upon her, and knowing that he suspected her of breaking her word, Nella bent her head over her drawing to hide a flush, which seemed to stamp her guilty.

"Only a place that Somers mentioned—some where beyond the 'Red Ploughshare.'"

"You asked him about it?" with pretended carelessness.

"No! He said that Mr. Vere might pass it on his way home!"

"Then he was an idiot! It does not lie on the direct road between this and Deepden!"

"You know it, Godfrey!" exclaimed Meta in surprise. "Why did you never tell me about it before?"

"Why on earth should I! Besides!" he added, quickly; "I had nothing to tell. I've passed it once or twice; but I've never been inside the gates. Come along, we are wasting the whole morning!" and he led the way to the window.

"And is there anything queer about it?"

"It doesn't look inviting, that's all! You girls want to make a mystery of everything!"

"Sometimes the mystery is ready-made," said Nella, as if to her drawing, but his quick ears caught the words through the open window.

"As when?"

"As when I bring down a pocket handkerchief and can't find it when I want to use it."

"Ah! that's awkward," walking away with his cousin.

"Godfrey," said Meta, timidly, as they stood together under the shade of an apple-tree in the kitchen-garden, "I can't understand you about Miss Maynard! Sometimes I think you hate her!"

"Quite right," interrupting her before she could finish her sentence; "at times, I give you my word, she aggravates me to such an extent that I can scarcely keep my hands off her."

"But then she is so pretty," hesitating, as she stretched her hand after an unripe apple. "And you had that long afternoon together."

"Long! I thought it would never end. Descent me from another two hours with a Spitfire."

"What were you so angry with her for this

morning! The drawing was all nonsense, I know."

"Well it wasn't the drawing exactly; but in her usual sneering manner she was secretly drawing parallels between me and that stuck up top, Cyril Vere—very much to my disadvantage of course."

"And you haven't told her anything that you have kept from me!"

"Told her anything?" an unpleasant suspicion darting through his mind. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing!" retiring into herself, directly he raised his voice.

"But you must have had something to go upon—out with it!"

"But, Godfrey, really—"

"Now, Meta, really. What was it that put such a ridiculous idea into your head?"

"That night after you came home—"

"Well, that night!" fixing his eyes pitilessly on her blushing face, and forcing the words out of her lips.

"I heard you ask her if you could trust her."

"Is that all?" with a deep breath of relief.

"What did you think it referred to?"

"I didn't know," hanging her head; "but it sounded as if you liked her better than I thought."

"And would you mind if I did?" his voice softening, treacherously.

No answer, as she put her small white teeth into the apple, then finding it too sour, threw it away.

"I will tell you what I like in a woman," leaning against the stem of the tree, "and then you shall judge for yourself. She must be gentle, with quiet domestic tastes (if Nella could have heard him, how she would have laughed) and a large loving heart; she must never speak a harsh word, and she must be blind, stone-blind to the faults of the man she loves. There's a portrait for you!"

"Not her portrait, for her personal appearance is not mentioned," speaking calmly, though her heart was beating fast.

"She must be fair, not too tall, and she must always have a smile ready for the man when he comes home. Now, which resembles it most—you or Miss Maynard?"

She did not answer, except by blushing like a sunrise.

"Meta, my own little cousin!" and he drew her towards him till his head rested on his shoulder, and his dark moustaches touched her forehead. Oh! why was she not lovely like that other girl, whose glances made his pulses beat, even whilst he hated her in the depths of his heart? "If all the women on earth were like you, the men would be infinitely better. You are not the sort of girl to throw a man over, whatever he did. I fully believe that if I went away, and forged, or stole or murdered, when I came back I should find you just the same, without a word of reproach on your lips, or the smallest sign of a frown on your forehead. I have never deserved it, but I think you like me. If you don't I haven't a friend in the world."

She looked up at him, her eyes shining with enthusiasm. "But I do," came out in a little whisper. Her heart felt ready to burst with overpowering emotion, whilst his never beat more quietly in his life; and yet he stooped his head and kissed her cheek. If she could have read his thoughts, which even then were straying from her to another, she would have torn herself indignantly from his encircling arm, but she fondled him with such an undoubting faith that if an angel had come down from Heaven and told her that he was false, she would have laughed in his face.

Womanlike she poured out the whole tenderness of her nature, never asking for a return; only accepting every small proof of affection, but grudgingly given, as a godlike gift to be treasured for a lifetime.

And he—he thought of the debts which were pressing on him like a flight of carrion crows eager for their prey—he thought of the fair inheritance, which would stop their clamouring cry for food—he thought of the secret hidden within the dark flexes which surrounded the

"Nun's Tower"; if known it would blight his prospects for ever with the mildew of failure—he thought of a cloud of golden tresses which had swept his shoulder as a girl slipped off her horse into his willing arms—and yet he did not hesitate even for a moment.

For the rich lands which surrounded Somerville Hall he had planned and plotted with the whole energies of his scheming brain.

Lina Somerville's beauty had made the task pleasant, but even whilst whispering his fervent love-vows into her ear, the estate of which she was co-heiress with her sister had ever been present to his mind's eye.

His needs were great, his necessities daily increasing. Something must be bought, or won, or stolen, to stop the increasing speed of his progress down hill, and his uncle's property was the handiest thing in the market of possibilities.

Therefore, having lost his chance with one daughter he pursued it with another; and whilst the birds were chirruping overhead, the sunlight gliding each leaf and flower, the butterflies flying from spray to spray, he asked Meta Somerville to be his wife.

CHAPTER XII.

As in a dream, too fair for earth, Meta Somerville walked down the trim walks of the kitchen-garden, amongst the homely but unlovely fruits and vegetables, by her lover's side.

Yesterday only a cousin—a make-believe sort of brother—to-day a lover!

What a wide gulf had been passed in the space of half-an-hour! Thirty minutes for once had held a lifetime of joy.

There was not a cloud—not a speck in all the azure heaven of his hopes.

Father and mother would join in her song of joy, and wake up out of the night of sorrow in which Lina's death had plunged them to realise the full sunshine of their other daughter's happiness.

Side-by-side through life, as now, with two small hands clasped over his right arm, grief would almost cease to be grief when shared together, and joy, when undivided, surely too great for this sinful world.

Happiness bound her tongue, but a smile hovered round her mouth, a blush fluttered on her cheek, and her eyes were full of tears under their light lashes.

His face was pale, his eyes thoughtful, and his whole demeanour as unlike as possible to that of a triumphant lover.

Suddenly she looked up and at sight of his grave face exclaimed in alarm,—

"Godfrey, you are not deceiving me! You really love me!"

"Haven't I done so for years! I don't begin to-day!"

"And you will be really happy?"

"How could I help it?" patting her hands.

"I am not likely to go about with a continual grin on my mouth; but you will have made it impossible for me to grumble!"

"And that will be something, won't it?"

"Everything! Shall I tell your father this afternoon, or wait a little longer?"

"What for?"

"I don't know. Perhaps he will think me in too great a hurry! Poor Lina has not been dead more than a year!"

"I know," very softly; "but no one else shall hear of it, not even Miss Maynard, unless you wish it."

"Why not Miss Maynard? I want to tell her at once. She will think you such a goose."

"Let her if she likes; it won't make any difference to me."

"She won't talk you into the idea that I am a villain?"

"No one could," smiling up at him with serene confidence.

"There's the bell! We must go into luncheon," with suspicious alacrity from the lover.

"Oh, dear! I didn't know it was time!" with unfeigned reluctance from the lover.

Miss Maynard was still touching up her sketch in the boudoir when Meta bounded into the room

and kissed her. Startled by such an exhibition of affection, she looked up in surprise, and saw Godfrey Somerville standing before her, deathly pale.

He pointed to Meta.

"Let me introduce you to the future Mrs. Somerville. Won't you congratulate us?"

"Oh, Meta, dear," taking her hand, "is it true?"

With a laugh and a blush Meta nodded, and ran out of the room. Nella looked after her with a distressed expression on her pretty face.

Godfrey frowned, and bit his moustaches.

"Where are your congratulations?" he said, slowly.

"I congratulate you," she said, pointedly; "and I hope from my heart that she will be happy. I—I never thought you loved her half enough!"

"And whose fault was that? You with your glorious beauty, came and placed yourself by her side, and, of course, you made her look ugly and insignificant. I hated you the first moment I heard your name; I hated you when I saw your face; I hate you now, because you make me feel a liar and a hypocrite to the best woman on earth!"

Nella got up from her chair, doubting if he had gone mad.

"What have I to do with it?"

"Everything!" grasping the back of a chair, and leaning over it with glowing eyes.

"Until you came this place was the one peaceful spot upon earth; I had been engaged to one sister, and everyone loved me all the better for my loss. I could see that Meta was only waiting for the time of mourning to be over. I knew that the first moment I asked her she would have me."

"You have no right to say so."

"Nonsense! A man must have eyes in his head! She was always over head and ears in love with me, and I liked her all the better, poor little thing! because she had the honesty to show it."

"Then what are you complaining of now?" keeping carefully behind the table, as if he were a wild animal likely to spring.

"You!" throwing out the word with fiery emphasis.

"Me!" with wide open eyes.

"Yes, you!"

He made a dart across the room and caught her by the arm, his chest heaving, his eyes flashing, every pulse in his body bounding as if with renewed life. Words were trembling on his lips, which, if said, could never have been forgotten—words that seemed to come in a torrent from his heart. Honour had no power to stop them, but conventionality in the person of Sir Edward, opened the door, and arrested their flow.

"My dear boy, I am so sorry! but this letter of yours was mislaid on the sideboard. No consequence, I hope!"

Godfrey, recovering himself with an effort, held out his hand for the letter with a muttered "Thanks."

Sir Edward, who had apparently heard nothing of his daughter's engagement, remarked that luncheon was ready, and followed Nella out of the room.

Left alone, Godfrey opened the letter slowly, not recognising the hand. Wondering whom it came from, he turned it over quickly and looked at the signature, written in a bold hand; it was that of Victor Maltravers. At the sight of a name which recalled the pain, perplexity, and misery of the past, his face became almost grey.

He read the letter, frowning hard, then crunched it in his hand:—"As a Christian and a gentleman"—don't think I'm much of either now—"I implore you to help me. Longer silence will break the heart of the truest girl on earth. I don't speak of myself; it matters little to me how soon I die." (Oh, of course not, we only live for the sake of some one else.) "I believe you know Miss Somerville—be alive, as well as the place where she is hidden. For what reason you wish to keep it dark I cannot guess, but if you still refuse to give up your secret your foot-



A THOUSAND PAINFUL THOUGHTS CAME CROWDING THROUGH GODFREY'S MIND.

steps shall be dogged from place to place, and it shall be torn from you. I am no longer utterly friendless, and if you will not treat me as a friend you shall dread me as an enemy."

"I should like to know what chums he can boast of! A man who has just missed being convicted of either manslaughter or murder is scarcely likely to have a surplus. Still here goes, there is nothing so safe as utter annihilation!" He struck a cigar-light, ignited the paper in the four different corners, and watched it being gradually consumed.

"Here's an omen! On this day of all others, when the new life seemed so well begun—and if I had not been the most unfortunate brute on earth, a certain pretence at happiness was within my reach—this fellow must needs turn up with all his cursed memories. I wish they had hanged him! He couldn't have talked much with a noose round his neck, and he could never have bothered me with another letter. Curse him! if it hadn't been for him she might have been the happiest girl on earth as she always was the best. Oh, Heaven! to think of her now!"

He bent down his burning forehead, and pressed it against the cold marble of the mantelpiece, a thousand painful thoughts crowding through his mind.

Once more he was a boy hunting butterflies over the moors in Devonshire, and a little child ran by his side with dark eyes like his own, a sweet pale face and laughing mouth.

Wherever he went she kept up with him, drawn on by affection, even when the sturdy little legs were tired, and she would have liked to find a bed amongst the yellow gorse.

She had such a tender heart, that when she succeeded in catching a butterfly—which was not often—she always let it go so soon as it began to flutter; and when her brother scolded her, she stopped his mouth with kisses.

She grew up into lovely girlhood, gentle, womanly and refined, but through the love she bore him she still tried her best to join in all his masculine pursuits.

A bright September morning, with the dew hanging heavily on leaf and blade—it came back to him as if it had been yesterday—only himself and one other, with their guns over their shoulders, and Robin with an elegant little rifle that looked like a toy.

How the tears ran down her cheeks, and she dashed her gun on the ground, as a poor wounded partridge with a broken wing dropped down in the grass at her feet! He laughed at her, and told her that she was a little idiot; but that other man, Maltravers, said that sport was unwomanly, and the tears did her more honour than the weapon she carried.

And after that it was by his side that she walked, though she shot no more; by his side that she sat during the pleasant luncheon under the trees; to his voice that she listened always with most willing ears.

This was the beginning of the end, and he was a fool and never saw it. He always hated him, that was true; but only because he made every-one love him, with his good-looking face, which might have belonged to some troubadour of old, his voice which softened so dangerously when there was a woman to listen.

Even Nina, his own property, the girl who was engaged to him, she could not resist him. When Maltravers came to Somerville her eyes brightened, her whole face lighted up, and she gave him the dances which she had promised to himself. It seemed as if there were some fiendish charm in the man.

Miss Arkwright, the beautiful heiress, who treated all her lovers with calm disdain, surrendered at once when Victor began to woo, and Robin—his own little Robin—she broke her heart, and—

"Oh, Heavens!" he exclaimed, writhing, as if in bodily pain; "if I could only have shot him then, before the last, who knows! She might have forgotten him, and been now as happy as any of them!"

"Godfrey, where are you!" said the gentle voice of Meta. "We are half through luncheon,

and I was afraid that the letter might have brought you bad news."

He raised himself quickly and tried to look like his ordinary self.

"The letter! Oh! I had forgotten it. It was only from a dun, the sort of correspondence to which I have grown accustomed."

"But you don't look well!"

"I've a nasty headache. A glass of sherry will do it all the good in the world. Come along!"

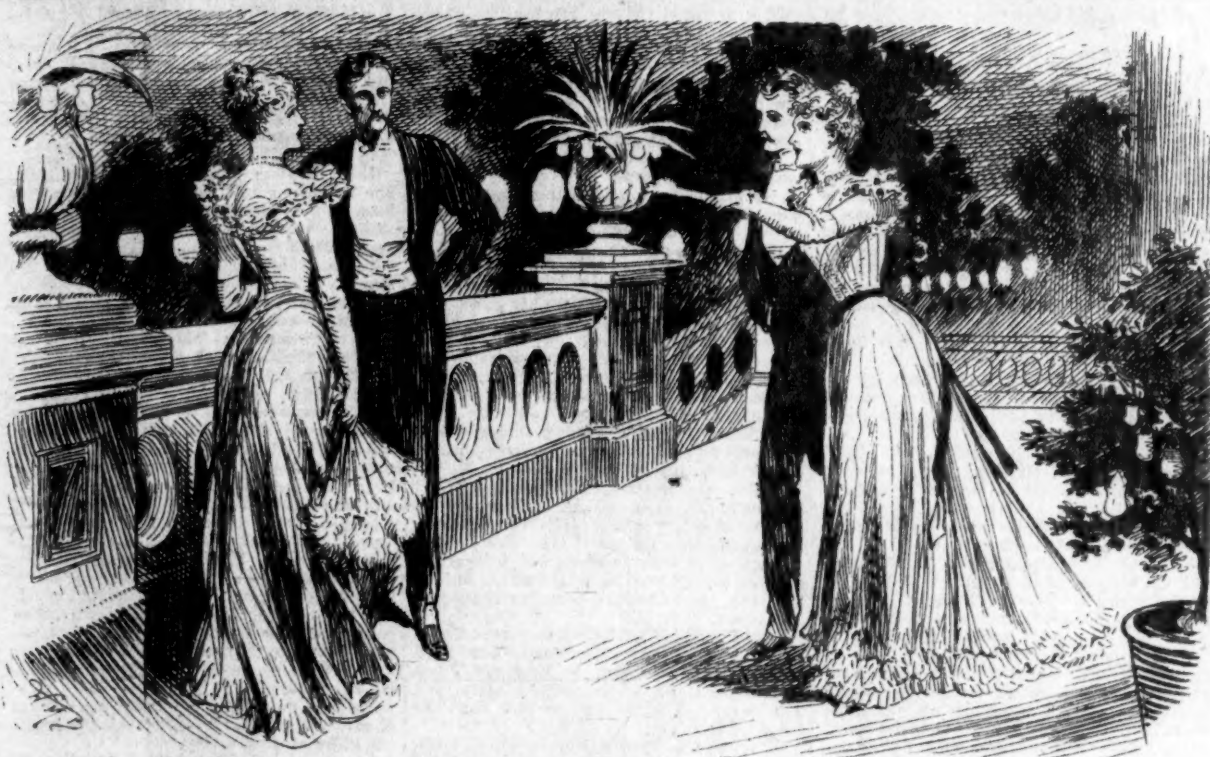
So saying, he drew her hand within his arm and led her into the dining-room.

After luncheon Nellie returned alone to the boudoir, and walked up to the looking-glass over the mantelpiece to see if she could find an eyelash which was worrying her left eye. After some difficulty it was extracted, and she was turning away when her handkerchief fell into the fender. As she stooped to pick it up she caught sight of the letter which Somerville had meant to destroy. Most of it was burnt but not the whole—one line was still legible; and Nellie instinctively read it, although she had no curiosity about Godfrey's correspondence. "The place where she is hidden." What could it mean! Who was hidden! And where! The next lines were burnt, but the signature—"Victor Maltravers" was clear and distinct.

She had heard that name before, but she could not remember when. What was it all about! She felt on the edge of a mystery, perhaps a crime, and dark and sombre before her mind's eye rose the lonely tower in the wood.

(To be continued.)

THE most costly book in the Royal Library at Stockholm is a Bible. It is said that 160 asses' skins were used for its parchment leaves. There are 309 pages of writing, and each page falls but one inch short of being a yard in length. The covers are solid planks, four inches thick.



"LADY URWICKS, WE CANNOT ALLOW EITHER YOU OR YOUR HUSBAND TO BECOME DESERTERS!" CRIED SYBIL RUTHVEN.

REDEEMED BY FATE.

—10—

CHAPTER X.

In the afternoon of that day Philip had looked very anxiously under the marble *Flora*, and there he found a tiny note containing these words,—

"In the recessed window of the china gallery to-night." So after leaving the drawing-room, when the Urwicks and other guests had gone, he first hurried to his own room and put the packet of letters safely away in his desk, and then proceeded to the appointed place, where Haldés was already waiting, and peeping anxiously from behind the curtains in the expectation of his approach.

"Oh, Philip! I am so frightened. Do you think we shall be found out!" she whispered, nestling in his embrace, and hiding her pretty head on his shoulder.

"I don't think there's the least danger at all, my sweetheart, for the servants shun this part of the house even in the daylight, and at night you certainly would not catch one venturing near. Miss Ruthven's is the only room in the immediate vicinity, and she has already gone there, and probably won't venture out, so we are quite safe."

"I did so want to speak a few words to you without there being a dozen ears to listen, and a dozen eyes to look on," she continued; "but for all that I suppose it's wrong to meet you here secretly. Do you think it is, Philip?"

He assured her very sincerely he did not, and this satisfied her scruples, in a measure.

"When I go back to 'Heron's Nest' I shall tell papa all about you, and tell him, as well, that I love you too dearly to give you up," she went on. "As to your being poor, I shall ask him which is of most consequence, poverty, or my life-long happiness, and surely then he will not withhold his consent to our betrothal!"

And, darling, I will work so hard—so hard

with the thoughts of you to encourage me," he said, pressing his lips on her fair young brow, "success is sure to crown my efforts; and then when I am a great painter, and the world talks of my pictures, and I have made a famous name for myself—"

"Only, perhaps, that may be a long time to wait!" said Haldés, with a sigh; and in his heart Philip feared the suggestion might be too true. However, he put as bright an aspect on it as he could, and went on to tell her of the letters and miniature Lady Urwicks had that evening given him, by whose aid he hoped to find some clue to his birth and parentage.

They stayed talking some time longer, looking forward to a bright future, with the trust that is youth's happiest gift.

The house was very still, every one had retired. Outside the moonlight was flooding the lawn, and playing in silver ripples on the sea, whose low music was the only sound to be heard.

Very regretfully Haldés wished her lover good-night, and stole silently away; while he, after a few moments' solitary thought, went along the gallery to his own room, having to find his way in the dark, for prudence would not permit him even to strike a match to guide him.

Just as he reached his door he fancied he detected something moving among the shadows, and coming from his room. A moment's examination convinced him this was really the case, for as his eyes became accustomed to the obscurity he distinctly traced the outline of a man's form.

"Hullo! What are you doing here!" he exclaimed, making an effort to catch hold of the figure, which, however, eluded his grasp, and passed swiftly and silently down the corridor, in the opposite direction to the recessed window, where he had just parted from Haldés.

Philip convinced it must be a burglar, started in pursuit, thinking to himself there could be no danger of his escaping, for there was no outlet

from the gallery at that end, and the only room that was unlocked was slept in by Hermann. Evidently the man, whoever he might be, was alarmed, and had no wish for an encounter, for he made all haste to get out of the artist's way, and the latter, finding it impossible to distinguish him in the dark, took a fusee from his pocket, and lit a wax candle on a bracket near.

"Now I think I shall have you, my fine fellow," he exclaimed aloud, and looking round with a glance that gradually changed into stupefaction.

There was no one there!

No one there, and Philip had been so positive the man could not escape him, for he knew he had not doubled, and the corridor ended a blank panel.

The young man gazed round bewildered, and then struck by a sudden thought went into Hermann's room, and found the German lying in bed sleeping the sleep of the just, and announcing that fact by means of a series of loud snorts and snores.

Clearly it had not been he, for he did not wake up even when Philip made a tour of the chamber, searching under the bed, in the wardrobe, and every place where a man might have ensconced himself, and at length, satisfied no one was there, Greville returned to his own apartment, perfectly mystified at the strangeness of the occurrence.

Had he been the victim of imagination? or had the darkness played him a trick? He could not tell; but at any rate he resolved to look over the house and see that all the doors and windows were fastened; and having convinced himself of this fact, he returned, feeling inclined to doubt the evidence of his own senses.

He sat down and thought the matter over; but all the thinking in the world could not explain it; and so, too excited to sleep, he determined to read through the packet of letters, and went to his desk for the purpose of getting them. He opened it, looked inside, and started

back, a cry of angry disappointment on his lips.

The papers were gone!

CHAPTER XI.

THE next day Sir Jasper took Haldes on a visit to some friends living a few miles away, and Sybil who had excused herself from accompanying them, took the opportunity of their absence to drive over to Urwicks Towers. Muriel was at home, and received her with a cordiality of whose genuineness Sybil entertained a doubt; but it is one of the advantages of civilization that society does not allow us to show our likes and dislikes; if it did the world would go a little less smoothly than it does now.

"Is not Lord Urwick at home?" Miss Ruthven inquired, finding he did not appear.

"No," Muriel answered, a faint flush drifting over the pallor of her fair face; "he went out this morning, and said he should not be back till dinner-time—perhaps not then!"

"And he did not say where he was going? Wicked man! you don't keep him well in order, Lady Urwick. Husbands should be made to feel the wife's rule at once, and then they get used to it, and don't rebel!" said Sybil, playfully. "So you will be alone all day!"

"Yes. Do you feel inclined to share my solitude, and stay and dine with me? If so, I'll send the carriage back to Heathcliff, and we can have you driven home to-night in one of ours."

Sybil acquiesced readily enough in this arrangement, and then the two ladies loitered about the gardens, gathered a few flowers, and finally came back to afternoon tea, which was set in Lady Urwick's boudoir—a pretty apartment hung with pale blue silk, and rich in pictures, vases, ornaments, and a hundred costly knick-knacks that Mr. Darley had sent down from London for his daughter, "the viscountess."

"What a lovely thing!" Sybil exclaimed, putting down her cup of delicate egg-shell china, and rising to examine an exquisite marble statuette of Psyche on a crimson velvet-bracket. "Did your husband give it to you?"

"No; my father!"

"But does not Claud admire it very much? I know how mad he is on art," observed Miss Ruthven, and Muriel never guessed the motive that lay hidden under the apparently simple question.

"He has not seen it yet," answered the young wife, averting her eyes.

"Not seen it! Then I suppose it has only just come!"

"I have had it about a fortnight; but Lord Urwick seldom, in fact, never comes up here."

Sybil had gained what she wanted—namely, the knowledge that husband and wife were rarely together, and her heart beat with a wicked exultation. She turned to Muriel smiling gaily.

"You said you would show me over your suite of rooms. You know I have not seen them since they were newly furnished before your wedding."

Lady Urwick rose at once and led the way. The suite consisted of four rooms—boudoir, dressing, bath, and bed-room. The latter was the end one, and was led into by the dressing-room. All were furnished in satin-wood, with pale forget-me-not blue upholstery, and lace curtains held back by silver cords.

"How dainty and pretty they are!" said Sybil, standing at the window to look out, and then glancing round the bedroom with a swift, keen gaze on which nothing was lost. "That door leads into the corridor, I suppose!" pointing to the one opposite.

Muriel replied in the affirmative, and Sybil added with a laugh,—

"There are few signs of masculine untidiness about. Where is Lord Urwick's dressing-room?"

"At the other end of the passage," said Muriel, coldly, and looking out of the second window as if to put an end to her guest's questions.

To her surprise she saw the sky had become suddenly overcast, and big drops of rain were falling on the leaves of the creepers and on the marble terrace below.

"It is a good thing that you decided to stay," she observed to Sybil, "for I think there is going to be a heavy thunderstorm—the air has been close and oppressive all day."

When dinner-time came they had all to themselves the great gloomy dining-room, with its musty smell of morocco leather, and its family portraits staring grimly down from the walls as if to forbid any attempt at mirth or merriment.

Lord Urwick did not appear, but Sybil made no remark on his absence, and Muriel did her best to atone for it by exerting herself to her utmost in order to entertain her guest, who seemed rather inclined to be silent.

As the evening advanced the weather grew wilder, the rain came down in torrents, the window rattled, while the wind blew and shrieked and moaned around them, as if there were souls in agony outside, begging to be let in. Then vivid flashes of lightning waved their blue flames across the darkness, and were followed by loudly reverberating peals of thunder.

Muriel, who was half afraid of tempest, hid her face in the silken cushions of the couch, but Sybil stood at the window with the draperies drawn aside while she peered out. Electricity in the atmosphere always exercised an influence on her nervous, highly-strung temperament, but to-night she was roused to almost uncontrollable excitement.

Lady Urwick declared it impossible she should return home during the storm, and so a messenger was despatched to Heathcliff Priors assuring Sir Jasper of his sister's safety, and also saying she would not be back until the following morning.

"Idleness Lord Urwick is at Captain Wildair's, and he will probably stay there all night as the weather is so bad," said Muriel when bedtime came, and she was escorting Miss Ruthven to the apartment allotted her. "I have put you in the room opposite my own," she added; "so if you should want anything in the night I shall be near, remember."

"Do you lock your door?" asked Sybil, bending down to see if there was a key in her own lock.

Muriel shook her head.

"Very seldom. I keep my jewels in Lord Urwick's safe, so I am in no fear of burglars!"

She wished her guest good-night, and as soon as she was gone Sybil flung herself down on the bed and covered her face with her hands, lying thus mute and still, while the thunder growled and muttered outside.

A terrible resolve had taken possession of her—terrible, treacherous, and cruel, and even yet what small remnants of good still clung to her nature revolted against it, and bade her pause ere steeping her soul in crime.

Her good angel, driven away so often and so often, came back to point out all the horror of the deed she contemplated; but passion rose up to drown his voice with a subtle whisper, and in Sybil's selfish, ill-balanced nature, her own pleasure had always been as paramount considerations.

At last she rose and went to the window, pushing back the disordered hair from her brow, and pressing her fevered temples against the glass.

It had ceased raining, but the lightning still quivered athwart the black sky, the thunder still rolled its booming echoes amongst the hills, and the wind rose and fell with that peculiar sobbing sound than which nothing can be more melancholy.

"Why should I hesitate?" she muttered, in a fierce whisper. "We all prey on each other—birds, beasts, and men; and she is nothing to me that I should pity her. Good and evil are only relative terms, and if I do evil to her, in order to do good to myself, I am simply obeying the first impulse of nature. She has taken away from me the only man I ever loved, and in so doing has spoiled all my chances of happiness, for the world and its pleasures are nothing to me if I lack the one thing to make me enjoy them."

She paused a moment and then continued,—

"It she be removed from my path I shall have Claud—and love and happiness! One life more

or less among the millions thronging the globe; What difference can it make?"

She laughed a strange low laugh, that would have made a listener's blood run cold—if there had been one by to hear it, and then she turned from the window, her mouth set in a firm, thin line, her eyes stern and cold, but glittering with a purpose as awful as Cain's.

Lady Urwick could not sleep that night. She lay tossing and turning restlessly about, listening to the thunder; and a slight headache that had come on earlier in the evening grew every minute more painful.

Suddenly bethinking herself that she had heard of chlorodyne as a remedy for headache, she rose and went to her dressing-case, from whence she took a small bottle, and poured a few drops out into a glass. She felt soothed almost as soon as she had drunk it, and not long after getting into bed again fell into a slumber that was, no doubt, rendered all the more profound by the narcotic she had taken. Still it was not a peaceful sleep, for it was full of troubled dreams. First of all she fancied she was walking near Lord Urwick, and he turned and held out his arms towards her; but just as she sprang forward to meet him she found a great rocky chasm, too wide for her to jump, lay between them, and she knew that neither would ever be able to cross it. Then he held up something which he said was a talisman, and it proved to be a diamond of immense size and so lustrous that as the sun shone on it it looked like a flame of fire, whose rays came nearer, and nearer, and nearer—so near that she felt the heat glancing into her eyes, forcing its strong odour of burning up her nostrils.

She woke up with a loud scream, and a feeling of unspeakable terror, to find it was no dream, but a horrible vivid reality.

Long tongues of flame were darting from the draperies of the window, and piercing the smoke which already filled the room with a suffocating dark cloud, that rendered the air fearfully dense and heavy.

Evidently the fire had been burning some time, for the woodwork of the dressing-room door, and window frames were all ablaze, and the dressing-room itself a mass of flames.

Just for a moment Muriel remained quiet, under the spell of a horror that paralysed every limb, then a full consciousness of her peril, and the necessity for instant action, forced itself upon her, and she sprang from the bed and ran to the door leading to the corridor.

It resisted all her efforts. She turned the handle, shook it, put forth all her strength to pull it, but it was in vain, it did not yield an inch, and gradually the conviction that the outside bolts must have slipped and she was locked in forced itself upon her.

She reeled back, and threw out her hands with a gesture of prayerful, despairing entreaty for Heaven to help her, then flew over to the bell, and pulled it with a frenzied impetuosity that broke the cord, although not before a peal had been rung sufficient to alarm the servants in their distant apartments.

Would they hear her! Would they come in time to burst open the door and save her, or must she die this most horrible of deaths! Must she stay there with the scorching breath of the fire demon fanning her temples, approaching closer and closer, till he held her tightly enveloped in his burning clasp!

Oh! it was horrible, horrible! and she was so young—so unprepared to die!

She tried desperately to keep herself calm, and looked round as well as she was able for the smoke. To attempt to get out through the dressing-room would be certain death. The draperies of the window nearest to it were also ablaze, and the hangings on the wall would, in a moment, communicate the flames to the bed curtains, for the fire had made its way with fearful rapidity even in this short time.

Muriel rushed to the other window, and stood on a chair, her white-robed form clearly outlined against a background of smoke and flame, while she looked out to see whether she dare throw herself down.

No, the distance was too great—it meant being dashed to pieces on the marble beneath, and she drew back, shuddering.

The pulses in her temples were throbbing as if they would burst, the blue veins started up like cords on her smooth brow, her brain began to whirl, and she grew dizzy with the burning heat and suffocating atmosphere. Consciousness forsook her, she fell back senseless, her hands clasped together, and a cry of prayer on her lips.

"Life! Merciful Heaven, life!"

CHAPTER XII.

LORD URWICK had dined and spent the evening with his friend Captain Wildair, but when, at about one o'clock, he found the rain had ceased, he announced his intention of returning home, and, heedless of his host's remonstrances, he mounted his horse and set out.

The distance was about twelve miles, but the roads were heavy from the rains, so he had to go slowly and carefully, and the stable clock chimed out a quarter past two as he reached the avenue leading to his own house. Riding slowly up, the reins loose about his mare's neck, Lord Urwick was thinking of the unhappy life he was leading, and, more than that, the misery to which he had condemned Muriel.

If she had complained it would not have been so bad, but this she never did. She went calmly on her way, fulfilling the daily duties of her life with a quiet regularity, consulting his tastes and wishes as far as she was able, but never allowing a murmur of repining to escape her lips.

"I wish I could set her free," he muttered, remorsefully; "I would let Urwick and everything else go rather than see her wasting her life in such misery as this."

He had come now to a gap in the trees, from whence the house was visible; and as he glanced up at Muriel's windows the expression of his face changed from profound regret into the wildest alarm. From two of the casements thick volumes of smoke were issuing, penetrated by long, darting arrows of flame, while at the third he caught a glimpse of a woman's graceful figure, with masses of brown hair streaming down over her white garments, and her arms flung aloft as if in entreaty.

The figure was that of his wife, and instantly the knowledge of her peril flashed across him. He dug his spurs into his horse's sides, and in a few moments stood in front of the door, which he opened with his latch-key, and then rushed frantically upstairs into the passage, where he was met by Sybil Rathven and half-a-dozen servants, all of whom, it was evident from their disordered dress, had just got out of bed, and arrived on the scene of action.

"Your mistress!" he exclaimed, incoherently; "Her rooms are on fire—get a ladder and put it up to her window."

Not waiting to see whether this command was obeyed, he ran along the passage to her door, and tried to open it, but without success. There was no key in the lock, so he supposed it to be fastened inside.

"Here!" he exclaimed to a footman, who was standing by, apparently too frightened to do anything save stare; "you are strong—come and help me to force this door in."

The servant—a giant of above six feet—obeyed, and the two men put forth all their strength in a desperate endeavour.

Crack!—crack! went the panels, and then it yielded and flew open, and a cloud of dense black smoke rushed out, driving them back with its suffocating fumes.

Thought, in that moment, seemed to flash through Lord Urwick's brain with more than lightning rapidity. He remembered that Muriel must have fallen near the farther window, and so, to get to her, he would have to force his way through the smoke and flames across the room.

He tried it again, and yet again, but each time he was driven back, and it became clear he could never rescue her that way. There was

yet another to be tried, perilous indeed, but still affording a chance of success.

Adjoining his wife's bedroom, farther on, was a small apartment she used as a box-room, and into this he went, flung open the window, and prepared to leap out.

A narrow parapet or ornamental ledge of stone ran along the front of the house immediately below the windows, and if he could by means of this reach the next room he might yet save his wife.

Just as he was getting out a small hand held him back, and Sybil's voice, strained and thrilling with agony, cried,—

"Claud! Claud! you cannot do it, and you will only lose your own life in the attempt. For my sake, forbear!"

He shook her off roughly, without replying, and, by dint of holding on to the carved framework of the one window, contrived to reach the other, although only with the greatest difficulty, for his foothold was of the slenderest description, and a fall, he knew, meant death.

"Thank Heaven!" he muttered, and heedless of the smoke and flame, he first tore down the burning hangings, and flung them through the window, and then raised his wife's senseless form in his arms.

How white she was—how still, and what a dead weight she felt in his clasp!

His heart began to beat with a new fear, but there was no time to indulge it, and, holding her tightly to him, he got cautiously out, and stood shouting to those below to hasten with a ladder, for he knew it would be impossible to reach the other window with his senseless burden.

He bent down, and gazed earnestly into his wife's pale face.

"Muriel," he whispered, feeling nearer to her at this moment of peril than he had ever done in his life before; "my dear—you are saved—do you hear?"

She did hear, for the change from the heavy atmosphere to the fresh night air, blowing damply on her brow, brought with it consciousness although not remembrance. She opened her large dark eyes, and gazed up into his, and for the first time he noticed what lovely eyes they were.

"Claud," she said, slowly and painfully, "is the chasm bridged over? Who crossed it first—you or I?"

He thought her senses were wandering, as, in effect, they were, and at that moment a ladder was reared, and steadied by half-a-dozen men below, so Urwick descended, and placed Muriel on a rug on the lawn, while the women clustered round with shawls and restoratives.

But the latter were not needed. Muriel was now perfectly conscious, and she raised herself to look round, her eyes falling first on Sybil—who was on her knees, sobbing hysterically—and then on her husband.

"Claud, your hands are burnt!" she exclaimed, quickly, attempting to rise.

"It is nothing—it will be all right in a day or two," he answered, but Sybil started up, and in a moment had torn her handkerchief into strips, and bound it round the wounds.

"Thank you," he said. "See to Muriel now, while I go and give directions about the fire engines."

But, unfortunately, the fire engines were a good distance off, and it was some time before they arrived. When they did, the flames had gained a terrible hold of the building, and the upper part of the Towers was completely destroyed.

"Lady Urwick had better come to Heathcliff," said Sybil to the Viscount, and he at once fell in with the suggestion, so a carriage was got ready, and the two ladies drove off without delay. Sir Jasper was told of what had occurred, and, anxious to reach the scene of the disaster, he rode off to Urwick, and returned some three hours later with the Viscount. The fire was now entirely got under, but the house would require partially rebuilding before it could be inhabited again.

"Are you insured?" asked the baronet.

"Yes—thanks to my cautious father-in-law, who is always on the safe side."

"That's lucky. But even if you set about the necessary repairs to-morrow they would not be finished for another couple of months, so you must take up your abode with us in the meantime."

Lord Urwick accepted this proposal rather reluctantly, thinking of Sybil, but he had no legitimate excuse to make for refusing the proffered hospitality.

"By-the-bye, to what do you attribute the origin of the fire?" inquired Sir Jasper.

"I really don't know, unless it was the lighting," Claud replied. "Unfortunately I was out when it commenced, but perhaps my wife can tell you more about it."

This, however, was not the case, for Lady Urwick could make no suggestion whatever, and in her own mind was puzzling over the mystery of the locked door.

"The fire evidently began in my dressing-room," she said at breakfast the next day, when they were all together, and all looking more or less wearied through their disturbed rest; "but how, I have no idea."

"Was there a light there?" asked Sybil Rathven, who seemed anxious to get to the bottom of the matter.

"No—yet stay. Yes; I was not well, and went to get some chlorodyne, and now I come to think, I left a wax taper burning on the dressing-table—but it was in a stand, and could not possibly have set anything on fire."

"It must have fallen over, and then the draperies would catch directly," said Sybil, with conviction; "I was awakened by a smell of burning," she added, "and went to the servants' apartments to alarm them, but I found they were already aroused by the sound of the bell."

Her idea was generally adopted as affording the true explanation of the catastrophe, and though Muriel had her own doubts on the subject she discreetly kept silence. In her heart such happiness as she had not known since her wedding-day was thrilling—Claud had saved her life at the risk of his own, and surely this would be a bond between them!

Once more he was reinstated as her ideal of chivalrous courage. She recalled with a vivid joy those few moments when she had lain in his arms, had felt his strong heart-beats against her own, and met the gaze of his eyes, filled with an anxiety that had looked almost tender. Could it be possible her dreams would some time be realised, and he would be her lover as well as her husband?

The first time they were alone together she went to his side, saying,—

"I have not thanked you for rescuing me; but all the same, I am not unappreciative of your heroism."

"Heroism!" he repeated, with a slight laugh; "you overrate my act by calling it such a grand name. It was duty, nothing more."

A chill came over her at the answer, whose meaning she misinterpreted. The fact was, Lord Urwick, like the generality of his sex, had a pious horror of what he called a "scene"; and there was a mist so much akin to tears in his wife's eyes that he feared one was imminent.

Duty! Then he would have done the same for any other woman, even if she had been a stranger! All the warmth died out of the girl's face, and she drew back, her lip quivering pitifully. At the same moment Sybil entered, and came gallily towards them, without appearing to notice their evident embarrassment.

"Come, Lady Urwick, Haldé and I have been so busy preparing your rooms for you, and now we want to know what you think of the result," she said, and Muriel followed her upstairs to a suite of apartments lying between Sybil's own, and the gallery where Philip Greville slept.

They were very pleasant rooms, looking out on a balcony that ran along the side of the house, and as Miss Rathven did not think it worth while to mention they were situated in that wing which had acquired the reputation of being haunted, Muriel had nothing but praise for them.

"And here"—said Sybil, opening a door at the end—"is Lord Urwick's dressing-room. It

does not communicate with yours, but we found it impossible to alter the arrangements of the rooms."

"That will do very nicely indeed, thank you!" responded the young wife, hastily. "I am delighted with my apartments, they are so fresh and pretty, and the flowers make them look so bright."

"I gathered the flowers," murmured Haldé, nestling up to Muriel's side, "for I felt sure you would like to have them, though Sybil said they were unhealthy. Do you know my idea of heaven is of a place where flowers never fade!"

Lady Urwicke kissed the fair young face pressed against her shoulder, and sighed. If she had uttered the reply that rose to her lips, it would have been,—

"And my idea of heaven is of a place where husbands love their wives!"

After that she saw very little of Claud. Most of his time was taken up in interviewing architects, and deciding on plans for the rebuilding of the Towers, and when he was at Heathcliff a strange sort of fatality—for which, it is possible, Sybil may have been answerable—prevented their being left together.

Meanwhile the ladies' time was occupied in making arrangements for the ball Sir Jasper intended giving, and Haldé, who had never been to a ball in her life, and had received *carte blanche* from her father with regard to her costume, was in the seventh heaven of delight at the prospect.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE evening of the ball had come, and from basement to garret Heathcliff Priors was one blaze of light; while the park and gardens were illumined by myriads of coloured lanterns, hung among the trees, and transforming the place into fairyland, as Haldé remarked to Sir Jasper, when they were standing together in one of the reception rooms, waiting for the guests to arrive.

"And you should be christened Queen of the Fabrics, for no Titania was ever more worthy of the title!" replied the Baronet, gallantly, and looking with deepening admiration at his lovely companion—whose Hebe-like beauty was set off to the greatest advantage by a dress of pure white, wreathed with sprays of apple blossom, while a garland of the same flowers crowned her sunny hair. "There can be no doubt as to who the belle will be to-night."

"You are a flatterer, Sir Jasper!" exclaimed the young girl, laughing and blushing, but not displeased at this tribute to charms of which her looking-glass had already made her conscious. "If you pay me so many compliments you will turn my head."

"And your heart, too!" he queried, lightly, as he handed her a programme in the shape of a gaily tinted butterfly. "You must let me put my name down for three valses and the first quadrille."

"The first!" repeated Haldé. "But that will open the ball, will it not?"

"Certainly; and I have arrogated to myself the honour of opening it with you, if you have no objection."

The little thrill of gratified vanity that shot through Haldé's heart at this distinction was quickly subdued by the sight of Philip Greville, whom Sybil had insisted on inviting, and to whom Haldé had promised the first dance; unaware, of course, of the intention of the master of the house to appropriate it.

Well, she must explain the matter to her lover later on; for to refuse Sir Jasper in his favour would be almost a betrayal of the relations existing between them; and this she dared not, as yet, risk.

Carriage after carriage rolled up to the door of the Priors, and set down its freight—lovely maidens in the first flush of youth, dignified matrons, with priceless jewels gleaming on their silks and laces, dowagers come to chaperone and play cards—all, in fact, of the *élite* of the county; for Sir Jasper was one of the richest men and

largest landowners, and looked upon as a very great prize in the matrimonial market.

His attention to Haldé did not pass without notice and comment.

"I suppose Miss Darrell is the future Lady Rathven," observed a young officer, who was leaning against the doorway, in company with several other men, all of whom seemed to be under the impression that they amply fulfilled the purpose for which they were invited, by looking on. "Are they engaged?"

"No, I think not," answered Lord Urwicke, to whom the question was addressed. "He seems rather spoons on her, though."

"So would I be if I were a rich baronet, instead of a penniless ensign in a marching regiment," said the first speaker, dolorously, as he put up his eye-glass and looked round. "Oh! I say, Urwicke, do you see that lady in pale green—the one who vases so beautifully and has such lovely eyes! I wonder who she is, do you know her?"

"Yes," answered Claud, drily, for it was none other than his wife; and he noticed with knitted brow Philip Greville was her partner.

"Introduce me, will you? She is far and away the best dancer in the room."

The request caused him to watch Muriel, who was certainly looking her best in a robe of palest green, trimmed profusely with lace that looked like shaken sea foam, above which her magnificent shoulders gleamed white as polished marble. Her rich luxuriant hair was twined with diamonds, and of all the beautiful women present there was not one more graceful and queenly than this unloved wife.

Muriel was devotedly fond of dancing, and for this one night at least she told herself she would forget her sorrows and lose herself in the charm of the light, the gaiety, the colour and brilliance of the scene. She grew more animated than usual, her face flushed, her eyes sparkled, she was ready with a gay jest or bright repartee, and though in the strictest sense of the word both Haldé and Sybil were more beautiful, they neither of them could boast the subtle fascination Lady Urwicke exercised this evening on all who came under her influence.

Her husband presented the young ensign, and afterwards he was inundated with similar requests. By degrees he awoke to the fact that Muriel was one of the belles of the evening.

"Lady Urwicke is a success," a certain duchess, who was the great lady of the county, said to him. "When she goes to London she will be one of the leaders of society—it is a rôle she was formed to play."

"Do you think so, Duchess?" he said, smiling, and not betraying the surprise he undoubtedly felt at this opinion from one who was herself a prominent leader of the great world of fashion.

A little while later he sauntered up to where his wife was sitting in a corner, under the shadow of some tropical palms, and fanning herself with a big, white ostrich-feather fan.

"You are enjoying yourself, Muriel?"

"Immensely; but you know how fond I am of dancing."

He did not know; her tastes were a sealed book to him though she was his wife. The idea seemed to strike both at the same time, and Claud looked slightly embarrassed.

"I suppose your card is full?" taking it up as it hung from her girdle. "No, I perceive the next dance is free. How is that?"

"I thought I would sit it out," she answered, rather tremulously.

"And are you too tired to change your resolution, and give it me?"

"Certainly not, if you wish it."

She rose at once, and took his offered arm, the flush deepening on her cheeks.

"It's rather *outré* for husband and wife to be dancing together, isn't it?" he said, with a slight laugh, as he put his arm round her slender waist. "Never mind if people do sneer at us as Darby and Joan. We don't very often give them the chance."

Muriel closed her eyes, and felt for a few moments as if humanity and all its manifold disappointments had slipped away from her, and she had passed the threshold of Elysium itself.

Claud valed as well as she did, and the slow, gliding motion, as the music of "Venetia" rose and fell on the perfumed air was more than delightful.

"That was charming, was it not?" said the Viscount, as the last bars died away in a long trembling chord. "Now let us go out on the terrace and get cool after it."

It was a lovely July night, with a thousand dewy odours blowing about, and the stars shining like great yellow diamonds, away in the deep, dusky purple of the summer sky.

Among the foliage of the trees the coloured lanterns looked like brilliant birds or butterflies, and there was a mellow softness in the air, scented by the perfume of the heavily clustered roses that were trained along the marble balustrades.

"Just the night for lovers," Lord Urwicke said, with a laugh that had a shadow of embarrassment in it. "If we were not married, Muriel, we too might perhaps be led away by its influence, and quote Shelley or Byron to each other by way of expressing our feelings."

For the moment he had forgotten that scene on their wedding-day, he was only conscious of standing there in the misty starlight with a woman by his side, whose large dark eyes were as lovely as those of that enchantress of old—Grecian Helen. He felt her small hand tremble as it rested on his sleeve, and yielding to a sudden impulse he bent down and kissed it, while to his tongue there rose words that had they been spoken might have altered the course of both their lives, and spared, who shall say, how much of pain, crime, and misery!

"Don't you think, Muriel—" he began.

"Lady Urwicke! We cannot allow either you or your husband to become deserters," cried the clear full voice of Sybil Rathven, who came towards them leaning on Philip's arm. "Here is Mr. Greville searching everywhere for his partner for the cotillon which is just being formed. I'll resign him to you, and I dare say Lord Urwicke will not mind escorting me back."

Lord Urwicke had no other resource, but it cannot be said he particularly relished the change, for since he had resolutely determined to put away from him all thought of his former love, her brilliant beauty had begun to lose its power over him; besides, he had really liked that dance with his wife, and was getting interested in his conversation with her.

Sybil may have been clear-sighted enough to guess what was passing through his mind, but at the same time she was clever enough to hold her tongue. Still, there was an expression on her face which would have easily denoted to a skilled observer that she deeply resented this indifference on his part.

"Do you wish to re-enter the ball-room?" he asked, constrainedly.

"No. I declined engaging myself for the cotillon, and it is so hot in there now. I wonder if you would mind staying out here a little while, that is to say, if you don't purpose dancing!"

He disclaimed any such intention, so they went to the end of the terrace, and seated themselves on a bench beneath the gleaming laurel foliage, where the music and laughter and sound of young voices floated out to them in a subdued murmur.

"What a handsome young fellow Mr. Greville is!" exclaimed Sybil after a few minutes' silence.

"Is he?" said the listener, not particularly inclined to launch forth into praises of the artist's beauty, and privately wondering what women could see in him to admire.

"And he has a wonderful charm of manner too," added Sybil. "I believe," laughing, "both Haldé and Lady Urwicke are three parts in love with him."

"Indeed! I wonder you do not follow suit, and thus form a trinity of worshippers."

Sybil raised her eyes reproachfully.

"I shall never fall in love again, you ought to know that."

"I beg your pardon, I did not mean to wound you"—hastily, and mentally calling himself a

brute, for men have a wonderful amount of pity for the victim of misplaced passion, when the object of it happens to be themselves.

Urwicke felt he could hardly leave her and hurry indoors as inclination prompted, although he would have liked to see whether his wife was enjoying her dance with Philip as well as she had done the last with himself. He remembered he had twice seen her vailing with the artist already, and this would make the third time.

The reflection did not please him—indeed, it made him feel very angry, and he thought to himself he would speak to her, and remind her such conduct was hardly prudent for a married woman of her rank.

Wrapped in his own musings, Lord Urwicke could hardly have been called a pleasant companion, but Sybil neither complained nor interrupted him.

She remained perfectly quiet, watching his half-averted profile, and did not attempt to move, even when she saw two or three of the men who preferred a quiet cigar to the cotillion, casting rather curious glances in her direction, as if they were surprised to see her alone with the viscount in such a solitary nook.

Sybil was playing a bold game, but she felt herself strong enough to carry it to a successful issue.

(To be continued.)

HOW FAMOUS HIGHWAYMEN WERE CAPTURED.

ONE of the most interesting features in this month's *Windsor* is an article by S. E. Waller, upon that famous gang of highwaymen, Richard, Thomas, and Henry Dunston, who infested the Forest of Wyche, in Oxfordshire, during the latter part of last century. After dealing with one or two of their most notable exploits, the writer gives an account of their capture and subsequent execution. "On Whit Sunday, 1784, when a village festival was being held, and a distribution of forest venison was taking place, Henry and Thomas Dunston joined a crowd of villagers and eighteenth-century gentlemen. A move was made later on for Capp's Lodge. The Dunstons had ridden over from their cave at Tangley Wood; and though they were known to the landlord, the whole neighbourhood was in such terror of their name, that that worthy thought it wisest to hold his tongue. Anyhow, the robbers were sufficiently well dressed and had enough money to take a part in the gambling scene in the Summer House, where play was kept up till nearly daybreak. Whether the Dunstons were unlucky at play on this occasion, we know not; but they stayed on, evidently with some purpose, until four o'clock in the morning. A suspicion arose that they had accomplices without, and an effort was at length made to eject them. After some words and blows, William Harding, the tapster, who acted throughout with the greatest courage, closed with Henry Dunston. Dunston shot him without a word. The shot broke Harding's arm. He still held on, and Dunston drew a second pistol, putting the bullets or slugs in Harding's breast. At that moment Perkins, an ostler, ran up and tripped Dunston's feet from under him; then, picking up one of the discharged pistols which Henry had thrown on the ground, he turned on Thomas Dunston, who had run to his brother's assistance with loaded weapons, and knocked him senseless by a blow on the head. Thomas with returning consciousness tried to aid Henry in killing Harding outright. The landlord now joined in the struggle, which lasted some time. When all were on the ground together, Henry Dunston, who was undermost, drew a third pistol from his tail-coat pocket, and fired point blank at the landlord. A quantity of halfpence in his host's apron pocket turned the shot. Constable Secker, of Widford, was sent for, and both the men were at last secured. The robbers were tried, convicted, and, I believe, executed at Gloucester, and even condemned, in addition, to have their bodies gibbeted on the scene of their crimes. After execution, the brothers were hanged in chains on an oak tree in Wyche Forest."

OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

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CHAPTER III.

THE SPELL OF VIOLET EYES.

THREE days later, as the rector's daughters were discussing their early tea, they heard the clatter of hoofs in the road, and looking out they saw a lady and gentleman rein up at their gate, followed by a smart groom in top and tights.

"It is the Molyneux!" cried Maud, somewhat dismayed, casting a quick glance round at the shabby room, "and this place not tidy. What are we to do! Anne is cleaning the drawing-room and is very much on *deshabille*. How unfortunate!"

"It does not matter," said Kate, calmly. "I will go and meet them, and they must come in here. Eunice and I used to be intimate friends, and she evidently intends that the intimacy shall continue, as she comes to see us so soon after her return;" and rising from her place at the head of the table Miss Randal proceeded to the hall-door, which stood wide open to let in the flower-scented air, and was just in time to be embraced under the vine-clad porch by the friend of her childhood.

"Dear Kate," cried Miss Molyneux, "what an age it is since we met. I am so glad to see you."

"And I to see you, believe me." "And me, too, I hope," said Sir Lionel, who was standing behind his sister. Don't leave me out in the cold, please!"

"I am not going to," replied the rector's daughter, smiling, "though I might have done so if you had come here alone. You have altered so much, I should not have known you."

"Yes, I suppose so," he answered, as they went towards the parlour. "I was in the hobbledshoy stage when I went away; but I suppose now I may claim to be considered a man."

"I think so." "Time doesn't stand still with us," he remarked, after he and Eunice had greeted the others. "Why, Miss Maggie was quite a baby when we left Molyneux, and Miss Maud wore short frocks and had a weakness for bread-and-jam. Now you are both fashionable young ladies."

"Hardly that," remonstrated Maud, with a laugh; "we haven't much chance of becoming fashionable here."

"Why, is it so dull?"

"Yes, rather. The chief amusements consist of the school treat twice a year, a concert at Christmas supported by local talent, two or three carpet dances in spring, at which the ladies preponderate, muffin struggles every now and then during winter, papa's bible classes, Laura's mothers' meetings, and—"

"Oh! stop, stop," cried Eunice, covering her ears with her hands. "We must change all that. Mustn't we, L!"

"Well, some of it, my dear," responded the Baronet. "For instance, the muffin struggles and the local concert might, I think, be easily dispensed with."

"So do I. I intend to wake up this sleepy hollow, and you girls must help me. We've brought some gentlemen down from London, and have started tennis already on the lower lawn. I want you all to come over to-morrow afternoon, and we will get up a match. Will you?"

They all said "yes" except Laura, who was obliged to refuse, owing to a previous engagement to go to a sewing bee in the village.

"Has Laura renounced the world and the flesh, &c.?" asked Miss Molyneux, with a merry twinkle in her fine brown eyes.

"Yes," replied Maud, smiling again to display her white, even teeth, "she is going to espouse the church, and has bade adieu to all pomps and vanities."

"What! Is she going into a convent!"

"Oh! no. She is only going to marry Mr.

Travers's curate, a very pious young man, which is nearly as bad, I think."

"Is that all!" said their visitor, laughing at her mistake. "Laura, my dear, I congratulate you."

"Thanks," murmured the ugly duckling of the family, blushing to the roots of her sandy hair, and looking plainer than ever.

"Well, at any rate," observed Sir Lionel, "you are fashionable in one way," and he cast rather a longing glance at the tea equipage.

"What is that?"

"You indulge in five o'clock tea."

"It is hardly an indulgence," announced straightforward Kate. "We dine early, and it is quite a meal to us."

"Very sensible. We dine at eight, and I tell my mother it is nothing more than supper."

"May I give you some?" asked Maud, deftly handing a quaint little Salopian cup with her slim fingers.

"Thanks. I have a weakness that way."

But when he received the cup from the fair dispenser he did not alight down at her side as she expected he would, but went over to the window where Maggie was sitting, and began chatting to her.

"Have you renounced the world like your sister?" he inquired.

"Oh, no," she replied, with a shy, upward glance from her lovely eyes.

"By Jove, what a pretty girl!" thought the Baronet, continuing aloud. "Then we shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow, to tennis!"

"Thanks, yes. I shall be glad to come, but I don't know how to play."

"In that case I shall have the pleasure of teaching you. You will be on my side, remember."

"Thanks," she murmured again. "I am afraid you will lose."

"I dare say I shall," muttered the Baronet, in an aside, "as I shall be studying you and not the game." Aloud, however, he only uttered a few polite nothings.

"What a beautiful animal!" exclaimed Maggie, as a huge Swiss dog with a rough, tawny coat, and a great black muzzle, pushed open the gate and shuffled up the path to the house. "I wonder who he belongs to!"

"He! That is Rufus. He is mine. I bought him from the monks as we were coming home through Switzerland. He is only four months old, so I take it he will be gigantic when he is full grown. Here, Rufus, come here, sir."

The dog, hearing his master's voice, lumbered up and sprang through the window, alighting at his feet.

"Who gave you permission to come in, sir! you rascal!" and Sir Lionel lifted his whip.

"Don't beat him," pleaded Maggie, putting a white, dimpled arm round his shaggy neck. "I love dogs, and we haven't one, so it is quite a treat to have one to fondle."

"And be so fondled," thought his master. "Well, I won't give him the thrashing he deserves this time. He is very disobedient. If I can't break him to heel I shall give him away."

"I wish I might have him," sighed the girl, enviously, stroking the shiny black muzzle that was being thrust into her pink palm.

"I will give him to you," said the young man, rather eagerly, "if Mr. Randal will allow you to have him."

"I'm afraid he wouldn't. Rufus is too big. We shouldn't know where to put him."

"Is that the only objection?"

"Yes, I think so."

"In that case, then, I can give you a dog that your father can't object to. He is a very pretty little fellow. Quite a lady's pet."

"Kate, do you think I might have him?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes, I am sure papa won't mind."

"Then, if I am not robbing you, I should so much like to have him."

"Not at all. I have a dozen, so can easily spare one. I will send him down to you to-morrow," he added, as they took their leave.

And he was as good as his word. The next day the smart groom brought down the tiny lion

dog in a dainty basket, with a fluffy, blue mat, and a big, blue bow round his neck, with Sir Lionel's compliments.

"That is a good beginning," said Maud, with a gleam in her cold eyes.

"What do you mean?" asked her sister.

"I mean what I say, that it is a good beginning; that it looks as though the lord of all you broad acres meant business, and as though you stand a good chance of some day being mistress of Molyneux Hall."

"What rubbish you talk!" said Maggie, pettishly, taking the little animal in her arms, and going up to her room.

Yet, though she was vexed at Maud making such a remark, all the time she was dressing, and while they were walking across the meadow lands, that lay between the Parsonage and the great house, the words, "Mistress of Molyneux Hall" rang in her ears like a refrain.

They were warmly welcomed on their arrival by Lady Molyneux, an elegant, aristocratic woman, with white hair and a careworn face, and a look of ever intent watchfulness in her dark eyes, probably the result of her never-ceasing anxiety with regard to her only son's mental welfare, and were at once carried off to the lawn by Eunice, where three or four gentlemen were lounging in easy chairs and smoking with their hosts.

He rose with marked alacrity at the advent of the Rector's daughters, and greeted them warmly, introducing his friends.

Captain Clinton, a dashing hussar, immediately attached himself to Maud, who was looking very charming. Kate's partner was a fox-hunting squire from Northumberland; Eunice paired off with the Comte de Villefille, a handsome Frenchman, and Maggie, as pre-arranged, played with Sir Lionel.

There was a great deal of merriment over the awkward play of the Misses Randal, but after a time the two eldest improved. Maggie, however, proved a hopeless case, probably because she was too lazy to throw herself genuinely into the spirit of the game.

"Shall we rest a little and watch the others," suggested the Baronet, after a time. "We can sit in the swing, if you like, and you can then study the game at your ease and leisure."

"Yes, that will be delightful," agreed his fair companion, and together they went over to the swing hung between two sturdy oaks, and he plied up the soft cushions for her to lean against, and sat beside her and they swung gently to-and-fro, and he looked long and often at the beautiful face shadowed by the great white hat, and thought he had never seen anything so lovely or fresh.

"You don't care for tennis much, Miss Randal?" he observed.

"What makes you think so?" she inquired, smilingly.

"Well, you play in a languid fashion as though the game wasn't worth the candle."

"Do I?"

"Yes. Now confess you think it a stupid game."

"It would be high treason to say so to you, who advocate it so warmly."

"Not at all. Different things amuse different people, and at all times we should speak the truth."

"Do you think so? Do you think nothing justifies a fib or a white lie?"

"Nothing," he answered, gravely, almost sternly. "We should neither speak nor act them."

As he spoke Maggie glanced down at her ungloved, ringless hands, and winced a little. Maud had suggested the propriety of her taking off the shabby little gold ring with "Mizpah" on it, that she always wore on the third finger of her left hand, the pledge of her engagement to O'Hara, and she had done so, slipping it into her pocket, ere they reached the Hall, and now she felt she was acting a lie; concealing the only outward and visible sign of her betrothal. She, however, said, brightly enough,—

"In that case I must acknowledge that I do not consider it an intellectual pastime, and that I do not care for it at all."

"I am sorry for that," replied her host, regretfully. "I hoped you and your sisters would have spent many pleasant afternoons here."

"And I hope we shall, too," she rejoined, with that shy, graceful air which was one of her chief charms in Sir Lionel's eyes. "My sisters evidently enjoy it," and she glanced at Kate and Maud, who, racket in hand, flushed and excited, were chasing balls about with amazing agility. "It would be a pity to debar them the pleasure of playing on my account."

"Certainly, of course," he agreed, with unnecessary eagerness, "they must come whenever and as often as they wish. We must find some other amusement for you. What do you like best?"

"Going on the river. I think there is nothing so delightful as to lie in a boat on a heap of cushions and float down with the stream on a sunny day."

"I agree with you there. Only I like rowing instead of the *dolce far niente* when I am in a boat. I shall be able to gratify your love of the river, for I have ordered a skiff and expect it here shortly. I hope when it arrives that you will let me have the pleasure of rowing you in it often."

"I shall be delighted to do so," she answered, joyously.

And then they went on chatting about boating until the sound of the gong rang out on the balmy air summoning them in to dinner, and no thought of the impropriety of an engaged woman going about with another man crossed the mind of this gay, careless butterfly.

What did fill her mind, though, was a sort of awe at the grandeur and magnificence of the palatial mansion of the man who was so evidently struck by her brilliant beauty.

Molyneux Hall was a grand old place of the Elizabethan era, with thick, clustering, twisted chimney-stacks, peaked gables, oriel windows, and mossy, ivy-grown terraces. A flight of steps led down to the principal avenue or drive, flanked with great limes, and away in the distance was a sweep of park and woodland, where the deer herded and the river wound like a silver ribbon amid its emerald setting.

The entrance-hall was forty feet high, with a dome-like roof and panelled walls, full of grim men in armour, shields of death-dealing weapons, and trophies of the chase. The drawing-room was a magnificent apartment, all pale green satin embroidered with gold, filled with rare china and art treasures.

Maggie had seen it often while the family were away, but then the costly curtains had been down, and the embroidered chairs and lounges covered with holland jackets, and the china and knock-knocks safe in dark closets, and she nearly gasped when she saw it in all its uncovered splendour. The light of the rose-coloured candles reflected a hundred times in the many mirrors that hung about.

"This is an unceremonious dinner. We are not going to don swallowtails to-night," said her host, as he led her to the dining-room, and placed her at his right hand. "I trust you don't mind."

"Not at all," she murmured, almost overcome by his condescension, blushing like a carnation. "I don't like ceremony."

"Between ourselves, neither do I," he said, confidentially lowering his voice. "Sometimes I wish I had been born the son of a blacksmith. I could have thrown *les coveneances* to the four winds then."

"Yes, but you would not have been master of this beautiful place."

"True," he answered, his eyes following hers round the room, which was more like a boudoir than a dining-room.

It was all ebony and gold with quaint mirrors in carved frames, and old brass sconces against the walls, which held tinted candles, with rosy shades, which lit up the rare landscapes and sea pieces, and threw a tender glow on the faces at the table.

"Every position in life has its cares and troubles. No one can escape them. They are, I suppose, part of our lot here below, and make

us not too reluctant to depart to another sphere when the summons comes."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed Maggie, rather vaguely, feeling that she was getting out of her depths altogether. "I haven't thanked you for the little dog," she said, to change the subject. "It was most kind of you to give it me. I shall prize it greatly."

"Don't thank me, please. I ought to thank you for accepting him. I hope Jacko will be some amusement for you. He is very clever, I have taught him several tricks."

"I am sure he will be. What have you taught him?"

"Well, he begs with a pipe in his mouth, and will fetch your slippers, and walks on his hind legs all round the room, and— But, perhaps," he added suddenly, "I had better come down to the Parsonage and make him perform for you. When may I come?"

"Whenever you like."

"To-morrow!"

"Yes."

"Thank. I shall take advantage of your permission."

And he did. Day after day, on some pretext or other, Sir Lionel Molyneux found his way down to the old Parsonage, drawn thither by the irresistible spell of a pair of lovely violet eyes and the golden sheen of sunny tresses.

Kate wondered a little, when she had time to wonder, what brought him to their shabby and dilapidated abode so often. Laura, occupied with mothers' meetings, school treats, bibles and beetles, tracts and tobacco, and Walter Landon's pious conversation, never gave it a thought; but Maud, clever, keen, worldly Maud, saw through it, saw and knew that the Baronet's heart had left his keeping, and that her beautiful sister had won another adorer. And she would smile a little maliciously to herself when the two young people sat together, talking of dogs or boating, or dancing, or some other congenial subject, and think she would, after all, have revenge upon Terence for his desertion of her. One word might have warned Maggie, and have shown her error of her ways, for

"Sorrow is wrought
By want of thought
As well as by want of heart;"

and she was only a giddy, careless child, giving no heed to anything save the moment's pleasure, but Maud would not have said that word to save her life. On the contrary, she encouraged the girl to associate with Sir Lionel, did all in her power to throw them together, and would earnestly advise her, whenever she saw the shabby little ring back on her finger, "Not to be a goose, and advertise her bonds to their grand friends, as it wasn't much to boast of, being engaged to a struggling artist, unknown to fame."

"Constant dropping wears away a stone," says the old saw; and constant alighting allusions to her absent lover made Maggie rather ashamed of the engagement of which she had once been so proud, and finally the gold circlet was strung on a ribbon and placed round her neck, out of sight and safe from prying eyes; and thus, while Terence was in far off Yorkshire, the heart of the girl he adored was slipping away from him, going out to another by slow, but sure degrees, and he knew nothing of it, but waited and watched, and longed for the brief, ill-spelt scrawls that came to him much less often than he could have wished.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAWN OF LOVE.

"MISS MAGGIE, my skiff has arrived at last. Will you come out early to-morrow morning and let me row you up to Ickfield Woods? I came over on purpose to-night to ask you."

It was a sultry evening in the month of roses. There was hardly any breeze, the sun was just sinking to rest in his mantle of purple and gold, and the moon was beginning to show her round silver face above the summits of the distant mountains.

The air was heavy with the perfume of blossoming beans and the sweet scent of the woodbine. A nightingale was singing in the larch spinney; and Maggie, as she leaned on the stile leading to it, listening to the clear, ringing notes, and drinking in the loveliness of earth and sky, was deaf for once to the voice of her titled admirer. He waited for a few moments, and then, getting no answer, laid his hand on the bare white arm, which the short sleeve of her dress disclosed, and pressed it gently.

The girl started and turned to him, colouring brilliantly.

"I—I—beg your pardon—were you saying anything?"

"Yes, I was asking you if you would come out with me in the skiff to-morrow morning. Will you?"

"I—I—think not," she stammered, hesitatingly.

That day she had received a letter from Terence—a pleading letter, full of endearments, begging her to write to him a little, only a little more tenderly, and a pang shot through her careless heart as she read it, and thought of his steady devotion and unbounded love, and the way in which she was requiting it.

"Why won't you?" demanded Sir Lionel, quite unaccustomed to be refused any request, and astonished thereat.

"I—I—don't think I shall be up early," she replied, in more confusion.

"Not up early!" he repeated. "That is no excuse. Don't you care to come?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," she answered, eagerly; "you know I love being on the river. But—I don't think I ought to go," she added, despondingly.

"Why not?" he asked, in surprise, as it was no new or uncommon thing for her to pass several hours alone with him.

The girl raised her eyes to his at his query, and felt half inclined to tell him that she was the promised wife of another man, and dared not, therefore, pass any more hours alone in his society, as it was becoming too dear to her. But as she hesitated he bent towards her, and taking her soft fingers in his, said softly,—

"Maggie, do come with me. All my pleasure in my boat will vanish if you are not with me."

She shook her head, and tried to draw her hand from his clasp, looking resolutely straight before her at the cowslip-bordered meadows.

"Why won't you come?" he went on, retaining his hold of the little trembling fingers. "Have I offended you?"

"No; oh, no."

"Show me that I haven't then, and come with me to-morrow," he pleaded. "Come to please me. You know no pursuit gives me pleasure now unless shared with you. Do you wish to make me miserable?"

"You know I do not."

"Say yes, then!" he whispered.

"Yes," she murmured, half-reluctantly, and felt as she spoke that she was a traitor to that other man who loved her so well.

The next morning was bright and cloudless, a rare summer's day. The sun shone brightly on hill and dale, lighting up the tender green of the varied foliage with his bright beams.

The lute-voiced blackbird and speckled thrush were calling to each other as Maggie tripped along lightly through the many-coloured meadow grasses, weighted with dewdrops, on her way to the tray.

She had slept off her qualms and twinges of conscience, and was the same careless-hearted, frivolous butterfly as of old, ready for any amusement, any pleasure of the minute, no matter what it might cost herself or anybody else in the future.

"Am I late?" she asked, as she reached the river-side, and found Sir Lionel waiting for her.

"No, I think not," he answered, with a smile, "but I was rather early. Now, what do you think of her?" he continued, indicating his boat with a wave of the hand. "Do you like her?"

"Yes, she is a beauty!" responded Maggie, looking with delighted eyes at the skiff, which was built for speed, of polished American pine-wood, and was fitted with pale blue satin cushions

and every convenience imaginable, while at the stern was fixed a dainty azure parasol, lace-trimmed and ribboned, so that the steerer would be sheltered from the sunrays. "I should like to row about in her all day long."

"So you shall, if you like. She is more yours than mine, you know. See," and he pointed to the back cushion, on which was embroidered in silver thread the name "Maggie," "I have called her after you."

"I am very much flattered."

"Are you really?" he queried, doubtfully, as he took of his flannel coat, and rolled up the sleeves of his jersey.

"Yes, really."

"I don't see why you should be."

"Don't you?"

"No."

"Well, you might have called her after heaps of other people."

"Yes, I might, but you see I didn't, and I think you know very well that if I gave her a name it would be yours," he remarked, pointedly.

"Indeed!" she said, making ineffectual attempts to drag up a broad leaved, golden-chaliced lily, to hide her confusion.

"Do you want that lily?"

"Yes, particularly."

"There it is, then," he said, cutting it from the parent flower with one stroke of his sharp knife, and tossing it on to her lap, "and I only hope that every wish of yours all through your life may be as easily and quickly gratified as that was."

"Thanks—so do I," she rejoined, and then there was silence between them for some time.

He settled down to his work, rowing a quick stroke, and sending the skiff along at a great pace, and she toyed with her flower, and over and anon glanced at her *vis-à-vis*, and thought how well his flannels became him, and how handsome and high-bred he looked.

The Baronet's face was a singularly handsome one, straight-featured and regular, clean shaven, save for a heavy black moustache that hid his short upper lip and drooped to his chin. His hair was black and glossy as the raven's wing, and close cropped in the military style; his skin a clear, pale olive, and his eyes dark hazel. They were the only feature in the perfect face that could be found fault with. They were long-lashed and well placed, but there was a restless glitter in them, and at times a vacant stare, that spoke plainly of incipient madness, and spoilt their beauty.

Maggie, however, didn't notice this: she only thought she had never seen a more pleasing face; and then, remembering that she had no business whatever to think about him at all, she turned away her head and looked at the waving willows that seemed to be whispering other-world secrets to each other as they shadowed the rippling river, at the rushes rustling in the gentle breeze, at a rustic bridge with a tree leaning over it and its background of sky all mirrored in the water, and listened to the singing of the stream as it flowed over its sandy bed, and the voices of the feathered choristers clustered amid the moonlight coloured May blossoms, and the splash of the fish as they leapt in the air, and then fell back into their native element.

"What are you thinking about?" inquired Sir Lionel, breaking the silence.

"I hardly know," answered his fair companion, "nothing very important."

"Your thoughts were not of me, then?"

"Certainly not," she answered, untruthfully, her lovely face blushing crimson red. "How vain you are! Why should I think of you?"

"There is no reason, of course. I wish there was, and I wish you would think of nothing and nobody else."

"Wouldn't that be rather monotonous?" she replied, jestingly, to hide her embarrassment and confusion.

"I have not found it so, and I, for some weeks past, have thought and dreamt of but one person,

"She is my vision in the night,
My dreaming in the day,"

he said, pointedly.

"You will get tired of your 'dreaming' after a time."

"No, I think not."

"How can you tell? You may."

"I may, of course, yet I don't think it likely."

"Why not?"

"Because I'm in love, Miss Randal, and I'm not the sort of man to love lightly. With me it is for ever and aye."

"You in love!" she ejaculated, the carnation red again stealing over-cheek and brow.

"Yes; does that surprise you?"

"No-o," she murmured.

"Yes, I am in love, Maggie," he went on, as he fastened the boat to a gauged root that projected from the bank, and, stepping over the satincushioned seats, dropped on his knees before her in a way that made the frail craft sway ominously. "Can you guess who it is with?"

"No," she replied, shortly, lowering her head to hide the tell-tale blushes, and wishing that she was anywhere—anywhere out of the reach of the man to whose tender words she had no shadow of a right to listen.

"Shall I tell you, then?" he queried, softly, his eyes on the down-drooped blonde head he had learnt to love so well.

"If you think it concerns me," she answered, coldly, struggling to maintain her hard-won composure.

"I think it does—at least, I hope it does. You are the woman I love, Maggie. Tell me, dearest, is there any hope for me—any chance of your ever returning my affection, which, believe me, is deep and sincere?"

He waited eagerly for her answer, but she was silent, shading her averted face with the hand that was free.

At first, at his words, a mighty throb of exultation stirred her heart, at the thought that the prize, the catch of the county, the much-sought-after Baronet, with his old name and broad acres, was at her feet, captive, conquered by her, bow and spear.

Then came the sickening, chilling remembrance of Terence O'Hara, the poor struggling artist, whose promised bride she was, whose last words had been a pleading to her to love him always, and be true to him; and as she remembered, a shudder ran through her delicate frame from head to foot, and she experienced that vague, unaccountable sense of fear with which, despite his great love for her, he had ever inspired her, and she felt powerless to make any answer to the man kneeling at her feet.

"Maggie, have I startled you, child?" went on Sir Lionel, at last, as he felt the hand he held tremble in his grasp. "Have I been mistaken—presumptuous—in thinking you cared for me a little, and that in time you might grow to love me well enough to be my wife? Answer me!" he implored, as she still remained silent. "I will never speak on this subject to you again, if you tell me you do not care for me, as I have fondly imagined you do."

"It is not that," she said, at last, in a low, strained voice, "only—only—you mustn't speak to me like this."

"Mustn't speak to you like this!" he cried; "why not?"

"I can't tell you why; only I can't—I daren't listen to you."

"Daren't? My dearest, what do you mean by that?"

"Don't ask me," she moaned, "don't ask me; let me go."

"One moment, Maggie, and I will take you home. Tell me now, truly, do you dislike me? Is my society displeasing to you?"

"No, you know it isn't," she answered, with a sob.

"And—and—do you care for anyone else?"

His heart beat nearly to suffocation as he waited for her to speak.

"No," she said at last, slowly and heavily, "I don't care for anyone else."

Which was the truth. The girlish love she had felt for O'Hara had vanished into thin air before the superior attractions of the Baronet, both monetary and personal, and the poor, care-

less butterfly's heart, or what did duty for it, was given to Sir Lionel Molyneux.

"That is enough," he rejoined, releasing her hand. "As I know now from your own sweet lips that you are fancy free I shall not despair of winning you for my wife at some future time," and, loosing the boat and picking up the sculls, he rowed rapidly back to Wingfield, and escorted his fair charge to the Parsonage door, where he left her, with a tender pressure of the hands.

"Where on earth have you been?" demanded Maud, sharply, as the young girl entered the parlour. "Look at the time. Breakfast has been cleared away over an hour; and, gracious me, what's the matter? You have been crying."

"I don't want any breakfast," said Maggie, with a sob.

"Don't you? That is rather extraordinary. Your appetite generally is good enough. And what is this face all about? Have you been quarrelling with Sir Lionel?"

"No o."

"What is it, then? Come, tell me."

"He—has—asked me to marry him," replied the youngest Miss Randal between her sobs and gasps, "and—and—I was obliged to tell him I couldn't listen to him. And—and—oh, Maud, I love him, and it will break my heart!"

"You goose!" rejoined her sister, calmly, "hearts don't break in the nineteenth century, and there is no reason whatever for your not listening to him, or loving him, for the matter of that."

"But Terence," ejaculated the young *fiancée*.

"Well, what of him?"

"I have promised to be his wife, and I can't marry both."

"Certainly not, unless you wish to commit bigamy, and be imprisoned for so doing. But surely you will not let a trivial thing like your girlish promise to O'Hara stand in the way of your becoming mistress of Molyneux Hall, and my lady as well?"

"I don't know," answered the other, doubtfully. "Terry loves me very dearly, and—and I'm rather afraid of him."

"Pooh! What have you got to be afraid of? And as for his love, if it is worth anything it will make him only too glad that you should marry a rich man, and enjoy every luxury money can procure. Just think of the difference. As Terence's wife you will have to live in apartments, or at best in a poky little house at Hampstead or Hammersmith, or some other dreadful suburban spot, and wear cleaned gloves, and turned dresses, and shabby hats, and, perhaps, cook your own dinner, and scrub—"

"Oh, don't!" interrupted Maggie, with a gesture of disgust.

"On the other hand," continued her sister, calmly, "as Lady Molyneux you will live in and be mistress of one of the finest places in this part of England, with its private chapel, its vineyard, orchards, peach-houses, melon-pits, conservatories, park, and woodlands; its grouse-moors and rabbit warren, its splendid hall and gorgeous living-rooms, and its gallery of old ancestral portraits, and you will have an ample allowance for dress, could wear silks, and satins, and velvets; and, then, there are the family jewels and the famous suite of opals and diamonds, which, of course, would be yours as the Baronet's wife."

"Yes, I suppose so," said the young girl, reflectively, a flush on her cheek, and a gleam in the violet eyes, which were no longer bedewed with tears. "I should like to see them."

"So should I. They are magnificent, I believe. You can easily have your wish gratified by saying 'Yes' to Sir Lionel. As his *fiancée* you could, of course, ask to see them, and wear them too," urged the temptress, seeing her way clear to wreaking her vengeance on the man who had alighted her.

But Maggie shook her head, and murmured something about not daring to, and never being able to face Terence again if she broke her plighted troth.

"You are an unmitigated little fool," exclaimed, Maud, hotly. "Your making a good match would be an advantage not only to yourself but to us also; and if that is your only

reason I consider it a very trashy one, for I will see Terence, and tell him the state of affairs, and I promise you he shall not interfere with you, or molest you in any way. Well, there," she went on soothingly, as the poor butterfly, torn by conflicting emotions, hardly knowing what to do, burst into a passion of tears, "don't cry; it will spoil your eyes. We won't talk about it any more now. I will get you a cup of coffee, and then you must come and look at these plates of costumes that Eunice has sent down. We must choose our dresses for the fancy ball the Molyneuxs give next month. And only think, Lady Molyneux is going to make us a present of our dresses. Isn't it kind? I shall choose a Spanish dress, as it may come in useful afterwards. Do you like this Pompadour, or do you think this Watteau the prettiest for Kate?" and Maud held up two exquisitely-coloured pictures for Maggie to look at, and soon the two fair heads were bent, side by side, over the gay illustrations.

(To be continued.)

THE DUCHESS OF YORK AT A SMOKING CONCERT.

"MANY stories," says the writer of an interesting article dealing with the naval career of H.R.H. the Duke of York, which appears in this month's *Windsor*, "are told illustrative of the kindness shown to the crew of the *Crescent* during its recent commission by the Duke and Duchess. On one occasion they were both present at a concert given by the sailors, and while it was proceeding the Duchess noticed that the men were not smoking. She mentioned the matter to the Duke, who, having ascertained that his wife would not object, gave the order, 'All hands may smoke.' In an instant pipes were produced from pockets and immediately filled, cigars and cigarettes were lit, and before very long the room was filled with tobacco smoke, making the place seem more like a smoking carriage on the Underground Railway than a room on board a first-class cruiser. The Duchess expressed herself as delighted with the entertainment, and remarked on leaving that she did not know when she had spent a more pleasant evening."

A SUSPICIOUS HERON.

A VERY entertaining article is that upon "Birds' Nesting with a camera" in this month's *Windsor*, copiously illustrated with photographs by Mr. Oswin Lee, who has devoted so much time to photographing birds' nests in their natural surroundings. Mr. Herbert C. Fyle relates the trouble Mr. Lee experienced in photographing a heron sitting on her eggs. "The nest was placed in a low Scotch fir tree, about fourteen feet from the ground, in a small plantation on a steep hillside in Sreedsamuir, Peeblesshire. Noticing that there was an excellent place of concealment in a thick tree about twelve yards from the nest, Mr. Lee conceived the idea of photographing the old bird on its nest from there. He therefore prepared a seat for himself in the thickest part of the tree, surrounding himself with branches. From here he had a string to his camera, which was placed already focussed in another tree overlooking the Nest. For four hours Mr. Lee waited in his ambush, but the heron was so scared by the camera that she would not come near the nest. He then took down his camera and fastened up a large biscuit box covered in green balsa in the same place, leaving it there all night. The old bird was on its nest as usual in the morning, so up went the camera again in the same place, and when Mr. Lee got it all focussed and set, he covered it with the green balsa, leaving the lens looking out, and retired to his ambush. Presently the heron returned, and flew round and round the wood creaking, for she saw that some change had been made in the green balsa cloth. The poor photographer had to wait for nearly five hours before the bird was settled on her eggs and he could obtain his picture."

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COTTON WEAVERS AT WORK.

AFTER describing the various processes of manufacture of cotton in his article on "Life in a Lancashire Cotton Mill" in this month's *Windsor*, Mr. John Foster Fraser proceeds: "In the weaving departments, where the material has not to go through a perfect string of evolutions before it reaches completion, I found much more that lent itself to the descriptive pen. Here again it was machinery, machinery everywhere; but machinery by the side of which one could stand and watch the threads being picked up and woven into prettily designed fabrics. And in weaving let me explain that two kinds of yarn are used. There is the warp yarn which is mounted on a loom for weaving, whilst weft yarn is thrown by a shuttle. It is a pretty sight to see the girls superintending the running of the yarn from what are known as the winding cops on to the bobbins. Close at hand is a warping machine on which a number of bobbins are fixed, the number, of course, depending on the breadth and the closeness of the web. For fine webs thousands of threads are used—sometimes as many as eight thousand—but on the machine which I inspected at work there were 580. The bobbins are all ranged in a frame. It is delicate work, and not done in a few minutes, to bring all the ends together to be evenly rolled on a big roller. With smoothness and ease the machine runs and the girl attendant sits on a stool. Her chief duty is to replace broken threads. Each thread goes through a steel eye, and when the thread breaks the steel drops and the machine is instantly stopped. Thus the appliance, acting automatically, prevents the whole thing getting in a tangle. Hour after hour the threads run from the bobbins on to a beam, and I was informed by the girl who had to keep her eye on the machine I inspected, there were 10,500 yards of thread on the particular beam before her."

WHY THE DUKE OF YORK WAS PROMOTED.

In an interesting article, dealing with the career of H.R.H. the Duke of York in the Royal Navy, the writer narrates an incident in which our future king displayed what manner of seaman he was. It was during the summer naval manoeuvres off the coast of Ireland in 1889, and the Prince was in charge of one of the finest torpedo boats, when "it happened that one of the torpedo squadron disabled her screw, and was in danger of drifting on to a lee shore. The sea was running high and there was a stiff gale blowing. Prince George was sent to her assistance. The task was a most difficult one, owing to the delicate nature of the construction of such boats. He showed, however, such skill, judgment, and nerve in approaching, securing with wire hawser after several hours' effort, and ultimately towing the disabled craft into safety, as won him high encomiums of praise to the Admiralty from Captain Fitzgerald and other senior officers who witnessed his conduct on that occasion. The achievement was, perhaps, the more noteworthy as Prince George (like Nelson and many another distinguished naval officer) suffers terribly from sea-sickness, and the behaviour of a torpedo-boat in rough weather is not the most conducive to quietness of nerve or the comfortably collecting of the thoughts. It was, doubtless, as a consequence of this and sundry other proofs of his naval capability that the Admiralty ordered him on May 6th, 1890, to command the *Thrush*, a gun-boat of 805 tons and 1,200 horse-power, at Chatham, for service on the North American and West Indian Stations. It may be stated that such independent commands are usually given to senior lieutenants only, and that the compliment paid him by the Lords of the Admiralty was a real proof of their high opinion of his qualities, and not a mere acknowledgment of his Royal prerogative. For thirteen months Prince George held the command of the *Thrush*, and it was during this command that he was deputed by the Queen to be her representative to open the Industrial Exhibition at Jamaica. It is characteristic of the Prince's dislike of parade and pomp that he specially requested the admiral in command of the station that he might be treated simply as ordinary naval officer."

FACETIE.

MENDICANT: "Sir, I am blind!" Pedestrian: "What a pity!—then you can't see how it pains me to refuse you."

GOODLY: "What is grander than a man you can trust?" Cynicus: "One who will trust you."

"I don't believe in being affable to inferiors." "You don't! Just think how lonely you would be if everybody agreed with you."

SHE: "Yes, dearest, I made this cake all alone." He: "I can't believe it. Somebody must, at least, have helped you lift it out of the oven."

An old maid, on the wintry side of fifty, hearing of the marriage of a pretty young lady, observed, with a deep, sentimental sigh: "Well, I suppose it's what we must all come to."

"A FUN," remarked the pedant, is merely a play on words." "Yes," answered the frivolous person, they call it a play; but, as a rule, it seems more like arduous and unnecessary work."

MISTRESS: "Bridget, how did it happen that when we came in last night after the theatre there was a policeman in the kitchen?" Bridget: "Sure, mum, O! don't know; but O! think the theatre didn't last as long as usual."

"THE man I refused," she said, softly, "is now rich, while the man I accepted is poor." "Of course," replied her dearest friend, "it would be just the same if you had married the other."

"I HAVE never acted contrary to the dictates of my conscience," said the rich man, proudly. "But some of us," replied the poor man, regretfully, "are not blessed with such easy-going consciences."

"HOW can you scold all the time?" was asked of the woman with five stepchildren and an indolent husband. "I can't just explain it, but I know that I'm blessed with wonderful powers of endurance."

COBBLE: "I've got one of the finest suburban homes you ever saw—solid comfort, old man." Stone: "That so? I'm thinking of buying a suburban place myself." Cobble: "Then buy mine."

HUSBAND: "What did you think when you heard the chandelier fall in the night?" Wife: "Why, I thought you had been detained on 'business' again, and were getting upstairs as quietly as you could."

LIEUTENANT (to his orderly): "Bring me a beefsteak and poached egg." Orderly: "Excuse me, Lieutenant, but haven't you forgotten that you are to dine to-night at Countess Pampetis?" Lieutenant: "That's so! I had forgotten it. Bring me two beefsteaks and two poached eggs."

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SOCIETY.

THE Duke and Duchess of York will present the prizes to the boys of the Feltham Industrial School on July 1st.

THE Duke of Connaught is regarded by the Queen as more closely resembling his father in personal appearance and disposition than any other of her sons.

THE general idea among well-informed people seems to be that the Duke of Connaught and his son, Prince Arthur, will give up their claims to the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha duchy in favour of the young Duke of Albany.

WHEN a maid-of-honour to Queen Victoria has survived her youthful charms and at middle-age is still unmarried, she is relieved of duty, and has her salary increased from £400 a year to £600.

THE German Empress commands the famous Pasewalk cuirassiers, and she is not infrequently seen riding at their head as colonel and saluting the Emperor, then reining in beside him to see them pass.

IT is now settled that the Emperor and Empress of Russia will go to Darmstadt in the month of September for a stay of several weeks. It is, however, quite uncertain whether their Majesties will pay a visit to Scotland this year.

THE Crown Prince of Denmark speaks English without the very slightest foreign accent, and a stranger, hearing him converse, would never imagine him to be a foreigner. The Emperor of Germany, on the contrary, despite his having an English mother, is by no means perfect in our language.

PRINCESS VICTORIA OF WALES arranges flowers beautifully, and usually prepares the dinner-table decorations at Sandringham. It is Princess Victoria also, who frequently makes up the buttonholes so much worn by the Prince of Wales.

DURING the Prince of Wales's visit to the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire at Compton Place, in July from the 15th to the 17th, he will visit the show of the Sussex Agricultural Society which will then be taking place at Eastbourne.

THE King of Greece includes among his pet aversions a perfect horror of the curled fringe which has for years been so popular a form of coiffure. His Majesty actually forbids Queen Olga and his daughters to wear their hair in this becoming style.

THERE are only seven ambassadors representing England abroad. The seven Great Powers entitled to receive them are France, Austria, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United States, and Turkey. Their salaries range from £10,000 to £7,000, the British Ambassador at Paris receiving the highest sum, and holding the most coveted post in the diplomatic service abroad.

THE Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha has decided to devote the Silver Wedding present of ten thousand marks given to him and the Duchess by the town of Coburg, towards founding a bath-house, erected on the newest plans, for the people in his capital. The idea has been received with great satisfaction by the Coburgers.

THE members of reigning houses are exceedingly chary in offering their hands by way of greeting. The Prince of Wales displays the greatest freedom and liberality in shaking hands, probably because he is so thoroughly *fin de siècle*; yet at levées and Drawing-rooms he merely shakes hands with his acquaintances, and responds only by a slight inclination of the head to the obeisances of the majority of those who pass him.

VENUS, the Prince of Wales's favourite dog, is a fortunate animal; and, as may be imagined, leads a very pleasant life. She accompanies H.R.H. when he goes abroad, and on these occasions is in charge of the Prince's valet, who looks after the dog when it is impossible that her Royal master can take her with him. Venus is a Dandie Dinmont, and belonged to the late lamented Duke of Clarence, hence the great affection lavished on the little animal by our future King.

STATISTICS.

THE flower-trade of London is estimated to amount to £5,000 a day.

HALF a million lives are daily dependent upon the efficiency of iron and steel wire ropes.

IT is estimated that the men of Great Britain spend £250,000 a year on silk hats.

A GOOD Arabian horse can canter in the desert for 24 hours in summer and 48 hours in winter without drinking.

GEMS.

A MAN is strong when he admits to himself his own weakness.

HE hazardeth much who depends upon learning for his experience.

HE that does a base thing in zeal to serve his friend, burns the golden thread that ties their hearts together.

THE beauty that addresses itself to the eye is only the spell of the moment; the eye of the body is not always that of the soul.

SUCCESS rides on every hour; grapple it, and you may win, but without a grapple it will never go with you. Work is the weapon of honour, and he who lacks the weapon will never triumph.

TRUE benevolence is that which helps a man to stand upon his own feet and govern his own life, rendering further aid unnecessary; and the charity which forgets this aim simply debases the recipient, though it may surround him with physical comforts.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BROILED CHICKEN.—Singe and split a young chicken down the back, and wash it in two quarts of water and one teaspoonful of soda; when perfectly clean wipe dry with a cloth; place it on a dish, season with salt and pepper and one tablespoonful of olive oil or soft butter; rub well in the seasoning; place in a double gridiron and broil ten minutes on each side over a clear fire; or, put in a hot oven, with inside down, and it will bake in half an hour; garnish with breakfast bacon and cream and serve with tartar sauce.

ORANGE SALAD TO SERVE WITH GAME, MEAT, &c.—Choose six nice oranges, peel them, and carefully remove all pith, pipe, and skin from each of the little divisions. Sprinkle over the pieces of orange half a teaspoonful each of finely-chopped tarragon and chervil, one dessert-spoonful of salad oil, one dessert-spoonful of brandy, and a few drops of good vinegar. Pile the salad up loosely in a dish and serve. If possible, place this salad on ice for a short time before serving, as it is nicest very cold.

FRIED CHICKEN.—Take a young fat chicken, disjoint, wipe each piece clean with a wet cloth pepper and salt it, and dredge with flour; mix a cup of lard and some fat bacon in a frying-pan; put in a few pieces of chicken and allow room enough for each piece to be turned without crowding; cook slowly until nicely browned on one side; then turn and brown the other. As fast as you fry the pieces, place a dish over hot water, to keep the heat in them while you make the gravy. Pour from the pan all the fat except two tablespoonfuls; add to this two tablespoonfuls of flour; mix smooth and add one cup of milk; stir until it boils; add salt and pepper, and pour the gravy in a separate dish from the chicken. Some like the chicken cooked in the gravy for three minutes. It is also very nice fried in olive oil for a change.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WHEN a fish has lost any of its scales, by wound or abrasion, they are never renewed.

THE oldest known dictionary in any language was issued in China about eleven centuries B.C.

THE price of medicine in Prussia is regulated by the State, a new price list being published every year.

A BERLIN watchmaker has invented an instrument which will measure time to one-hundredth part of a second.

THE highest inhabited place in the world is the custom-house of Ancomar, in Peru, 16,000 feet above the sea.

IT is a curious circumstance that some of the most important inventions have been discovered by lunatics.

THERE are about 80 distinct tribes among the natives of the Philippines. The Moros are the most bloodthirsty savages known.

THE barn owl, when she has young, brings a mouse to her nest about every twelve minutes, forty mice a day being a low computation.

THE floors in French hospitals are painted with a solution of paraffin in petroleum for hygienic reasons. One application lasts two years.

IN China there are large cities that have no municipal organization and spend nothing on public improvements or for official expenses.

THE Queen of Holland and her mother will spend a month at the Château of Soestdijk, near Utrecht, when they return to Holland, before settling at Huisloo for the summer.

THE drummer in Serbian regiments never carries the drum. It is placed on a two-wheeled cart, which is drawn by a big dog a little in advance of the drummer.

IN Burmah it is rather a suspicious thing to give money for a charitable object. It is supposed to mean that the donor has been very wicked and is desirous to make amends.

THE weight of a man's brain has nothing to do with his mental power. It is a question of climate, not of intellect. The colder the climate, the greater the size of the brain.

A PARIS inventor believes that he can calm the ocean waves around a vessel by spreading over them a thin cotton or silk net, made unimmovable by being dipped in a certain chemical solution.

OUT of 100 men whom you will meet in Tobacco, Mexico, scarcely ten are able to read, and two out of every three are held by their creditors as slaves for debt. There are about 500,000 Mexicans in this form of slavery.

VIENNA has begun the construction of bicycle paths through the streets. Ground has been conceded for the purpose of building a new street on condition that a strip be prepared for the use of bicyclists.

A water-tube gail is one of the latest achievements of Yankee ingenuity. It is no longer necessary to make the prison bars so heavy and hard that cutting through them becomes difficult, but instead they are made simply of pipes forming part of a high-pressure water system. Should any of these pipes be severed the water escapes and quickly gives warning of the break.

AFTER drinking tea for a century or two we may still learn something from the Chinese in the matter. They make and drink their tea differently from us. We draw our tea and let it stand. In China they pour boiling water into a cup and turn some tea into it, and when the leaves sink to the bottom, which happens in a few seconds, they pour the water off and drink it. The result of our way is that the tannin is squeezed out of the stewed tea-leaves, and we get a strong and bitter decoction, which helps to wreck our nerves, instead of the gentle stimulant that the Chinese beverage amounts to.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

M. A. P.—All cousins can marry.
A. M.—Apply for a judgment summons.
TOMMY.—The term is only applied in the West Indies.
N. F.—Not compulsory unless she falls on the rates.
FAILURE.—They cannot touch your separate property.
ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—Address to the War Office, Pall Mall.
PAULA.—Everything depends on the date of the marriage.
BLACK-HEARTED.—We should advise a mutual return of presents.
TIMID.—No such association exists either in London or elsewhere.
ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—This is a matter altogether out of our province.
REBECCA.—The Jewish Sabbath was (and is) the last day of the week.
R. O. E.—You can get the necessary form at the Bank of England.
DOUBTFUL TENANT.—The landlord is perfectly right; he lets you off easily.
UNDER AGE.—Women, like men, are of age when twenty-one years old.
T. S.—The quickest way would be to see the deceased's will at Somerset House.
CURIOSITY.—We never give opinions on the soundness of commercial concerns.
WIFE'S FRIEND.—Not until there is either proof or legal presumption of death.
END OF THE CRATERY.—The twentieth century commences on January 1st, 1901.
IN GREAT TROUBLE.—We strongly recommend you to obtain legal assistance at once.
ROYALTY LOVERS.—The Duke and Duchess of Fife were married on July 27th, 1899.
WORRIED SISTER.—There must be proof of adultery as well as of cruelty, to obtain a divorce.
PERPLEXITY.—The latest will which is properly signed and witnessed must be carried into effect.
UNHAPPY DAUGHTER.—The father of a woman of full age has no legal control over her movements.
MIMI.—Hanging for capital offences has been the mode of punishment in England from time immemorial.
ALL IN A FOG.—In 1685 Pope Gregory XII. introduced the new style of time, counting October 5th as the 15th.
S. W.—Try cleaning it with whiting and methylated spirits mixed to a paste, and afterwards polish with dry whiting.
PAN.—When people find they cannot digest the food they are taking, that should cause them to try something else.
PERSEVERANCE.—You cannot learn music sufficiently without a master. No books alone will give you sufficient instruction.
MICROSE.—A city is generally understood to rank before a town, though the reason for the assumed superiority does not appear.
AMY.—Try rubbing the soiled spots with dry plaster-of-Paris. When all traces of dirt are removed dust the powder off with a soft cloth.
POVERTY.—The servant injured upon the railway would have a claim against the company for compensation not against his employer.
QUEEN MAN.—Try rubbing these with a bit of flannel dipped in damp whiting. It will quite remove the brown stains caused by baking.
WAS WIFE.—When the shirt is frayed and pretty dry, rub the breast over with a clean damp rag. Apply the polishing iron heavily all over it.
MIDDLE AGE.—The fortieth year is considered middle-life; there is no further growth thereafter, and the body begins to take the downward course.
QUEEN'S NAVAL.—The cost of a battleship as launched is a little over half a million, and with guns and armament on board just under a million sterling.
A SOLDIER'S LOVE.—The number of volleys fired over a soldier's grave depends upon the number of companies in the regiment, each company firing one volley.
MATRIMONIAL DIFFICULTIES.—If a wife leaves her husband without reasonable cause, and he is willing to find her a suitable home, she cannot claim support from him away.
TIP TOP.—Wash or rub your boots clean with a flannel cloth, soap, and warm water; when all the stains are removed rub leather dry with another cloth, then apply boot varnish.
REGULAR READER.—A letter after being written and posted becomes the property of the Postmaster-General, until duly delivered, when it is the absolute property of the person who has received it.
WITCH.—Toast a small piece to the colour of mahogany; but the bread must not burn, only be well browned. Put it in a jug, and pour boiling water over it; cover close until cold, it is then fit to use.

CYCLIST.—At any cycle shop you may obtain a puncture patch which can be applied to your bag and stop the leak right away; if it is a big one, give the bag to waterproofers; repair will cost some coppers.

W. J.—The Queen does not sign the death warrants of criminals capitally convicted. The judge who tried them leaves them for execution, and if the sentence is to be commuted it is done by the Home Secretary.

MISTRESS PAUL.—Rub first with a cloth wrung out of hot water to which a little salt has been added, and after with a second cloth wrung out of ammonia-and-water. This removes grease and dirt, and brightens the colours.

SALLIE.—This recipe ought to remove the stains from your linen. Mix two teaspoonfuls of water with one of spirit of salt muriatic acid. Let the stain lie in it for one or two minutes; then rinse the article in cold water.

FRANTIC ADMIRER.—Under no circumstances is it proper for you to bow to her or address her until you have been introduced. Until you can accomplish that in some straightforward fashion you had better worship your divinity in secret.

COSMO.—The child of British parents born at sea takes its nationality from them; the birth is reported to the British Consul at the port where the ship puts in, and is by him transmitted to the Registrar-General in London to be finally recorded in the parents' parish.

FRANK.—Sponge well with a cloth wrung out of lukewarm water and ammonia, changing the water and rinsing the cloth as often as dirty. This also brightens the colours. If the weather is bright and fine open the windows till the carpet is dry; if damp light a fire.

YOUNG LOVER.—We are in some confusion as to your meaning, and we are tempted in the first place to say that a young man of seventeen and a young girl of fifteen have no business to be very seriously in love. Neither is it an age to properly know their own mind.

LOVES DUTY.

WHAT is Love's duty—how is it fulfilled?
By tender looks and hand-clasps—deep drawn sighs,
By protestations, promises, and words,
Or is it by continual sacrifice
Of self for those we love—a constant quest
To find whatever will make their lives more blest?

Of what avail is Love to either one—
The lover or the loved unless it bring
This sweet and loyal duty to discharge—
To take from life its every smart and sting.
To shield it from each harsh and chilling blast,
And make a heaven here, while life shall last!

And in all this what joy shall come to both—
The lover and the loved—what rare delight!
How each will strive new duties to discern,
Whose glad fulfilling makes each day more bright!
And both shall know the bliss that comes to one,
That bliss which finds Love's sacred duty done.

LALLAN.—Pound up half-ounce each of cayenne pepper, shalots, and garlic; when well pounded, put them in a stone jar and pour quart of good white vinegar, boiling hot, over them. When quite cold, add and mix well in a quarter of a pint of best Indian soy, and bottle at once.

EMMER.—Breadcrumbs a little stale, i.e., one or two days old; a little finely powdered starch may be mixed with the breadcrumbs if there is white in the pattern. Use a pad of broad in the first cleaning, then follow up with a piece of soft, clean flannel, and clean, unused breadcrumbs.

SQUEAKY BOOTS.—Fill them with warm dry bran, lace or button them up tightly, and hang them in a warm room to dry, not near the fire though. When about half dry rub a very little castor oil in, and when quite dry empty out the bran, and your boots will be as soft and pliable as when new.

G. G.—Setting traps of small pieces of new flannel in the beds, and clearing out all you find in these each morning, assists the process. The diluted carbolic washing is a very good assistant, but the frequent rooting out of dusty corners, and beating and airing of carpets out of doors will also help.

ELLIE.—It would be quite proper for the mother of the young woman to nurse the parents of the young man, if they are in need of her services. If it is the young lady who is to do the nursing, such action seems to us to be unnecessary, and, under the circumstances, very unadvisable.

M. P.—To soften the pitch rub it in well with soap, and let it remain on for a few minutes. Then wash out alternately with oil of turpentine and hot water and repeat. If it does not yield to the treatment yolk of egg mixed with oil of turpentine may be applied, and when quite dry scratch it away and the pitch will come with it, after which wash thoroughly in hot water.

UNFORTUNATE.—It is a phrase that has been known in England for centuries. Books relating to necromancy were called black books, and many containing exposures were so stigmatised. There was a black book of the Exchequer, as early as 1175, and there is a terrible black book published by order of Henry VIII., containing an account of the abuses and crimes committed in the English monasteries.

HANNAH.—Dissolve a teaspoonful of alum in a quart of water, to which add sufficient flour to make a thick cream. Stir in half a teaspoonful of powdered resin and a few cloves, to give a pleasant odour. Have over the fire a teacup of boiling water; pour the flour mixture into it, stirring well.

FLORA.—The white rose signifies "I am worthy of you"; the red rose signifies love; the deep red rose, "bashful shame"; the deep red carnation, "oh! for my poor heart"; the striped carnation, refusal; the yellow carnation, disdain; the daisy signifies innocence; the violet, faithfulness, and the lily, purity.

PEDESTRIAN.—To render shoes and boots waterproof in muddy weather, wash a little beeswax and nutron suet until it is liquid; then rub a little of it over the boots or shoes where the stitches are. No matter how damp boots or shoes may be, they can be easily polished in a very short time if a few drops of paraffin oil be added to the blacking when mixing it.

ACROSS THE WATER.—Take some Gruyère cheese; mince it finely with one half the quantity of fresh walnuts. Butter some very thin slices of bread with made mustard and spread the cheese and nuts on it and press close together. Bottled chestnuts are also very nice for a change. Garnish with slices of lemon and serve with a dry sherry.

GATHERER.—A lady would shake hands on introduction to the relations of her friend, and also on introduction to the friend of an intimate friend. If at a friend's house a lady should be introduced to another calling at the same time, and she has fraternised at all with her, she should shake hands on taking leave; but if, on the other hand, she has merely exchanged a few commonplace with her, a bow would be all that was necessary.

BOUY BEE.—A savoury breakfast dish is made as follows: Slice four links of sausage in inch pieces and boil five minutes in two cups of water. Pour off the fat and add one-half pound of thinly sliced dried beef pulled into fine pieces. Thicken with one heaping tablespoonful of flour wet in cold water, and half tablespoonful of butter and a little salt. Serve with brown bread or baked potatoes.

BIRDIE.—More pleasant attentions on a man's part do not of necessity mean love; neither does a desire for her society or a deference to her wishes. Friendship may entail all these, and yet bring with it no warmer feeling. A man need not necessarily love a girl because he is civil and kind in his manner toward her; a man who is worthy of the name behaves in like manner to every woman.

DOMESTICATED.—It should be tested about every ten minutes with some white kitchen paper. When the paper turns black or catches fire, put it in a tin. When the paper turns dark brown, put in small pasties. When the paper turns light brown, put in vol-au-vents, fruit-tarts, &c. When the paper turns dark yellow, put in large pies, rich cakes, &c. When the paper turns light yellow, only just turning colour, put in sponge cakes, meringues, &c.

SUNLIGHT.—A fine starch glass for linen may be prepared as follows: Take of spermaceti, gum arabic and borax one ounce each; glycerine two and a half ounces, and distilled water fourteen and a half ounces. Set the starch over the fire to boil, and while boiling stir in two or three teaspoonfuls of the above mixture, the quantity being in proportion to each half-pound of the starch. The mixture may also be used with raw starch.

WORRIED.—If the spot was caused by a smut, repeated applications of clean cold water (no soap) would have taken it out, but now that you have complicated it with French chalk we fear you must try benzine; you might try plenty of clean cold water and a damper before you try the benzine, and see what effect it has; it will probably be best to place the soiled bit over a small bowl, and see that hands, damper, and water are absolutely clean; if that fails, rub on some benzine.

UNDINE.—Undine was one of the fabled water spirits of heathen mythology, who might receive a human soul by intermarriage with a mortal. According to the romance "Undine," by the German author, De La Motte Fouque, she was a water sprite and changeling in a fisherman's hut, where Sir Huldbrand saw and fell in love with her. By her marriage with him—a mortal—Undine acquired a soul; but the Knight soon neglected her for the Lady Bertalda, and Undine was carried away by her sisters into the sea. On the day of Sir Huldbrand's marriage with Bertalda, Undine returned and gave him a kiss from which he died.

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